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# *Some Christian Festivals*

TO WHICH IS APPENDED  
A BRIEF GLOSSARY  
OF CHRISTIAN TERMINOLOGY

BY  
ELFRIDA VIPONT

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*For Susannah*

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School of Theology  
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## *Foreword*

WHEN I was asked to write this book, my first impulse was to suggest that a considerable literature on the subject, for younger and older readers, already existed, and it might be presumptuous as well as unnecessary to add anything more. Further reflection, however, gave rise to certain doubts. There were scholarly books; there were informative books; there were books sponsored by one or other of the main branches of the Christian Church; yet still there seemed to be a lack. There were lengthy, though by no means identical, lists of Saints Days; there were devout expositions of the Christian Year; there were authoritative and attractive manuals for young Roman Catholics or young Anglicans, but very little for young Nonconformists, or for young enquirers, or for young people professing no particular form of religious belief.

Whatever our attitude may be to religion in general and the Christian Church in particular, the great festivals of the Church are bound to touch our lives at some point. For instance, all save one of the Quarter Days in England, Ireland and Wales, and all the Scottish ones are fixed for traditional festivals or Saints Days, and so are most of the Bank Holidays. Thus curiosity is aroused in many people unacquainted for the most part with the Church Calendar or with religious literature. It is true that none can grow up wholly ignorant of the Christmas Story, but there must be many who enjoy the public holiday at Whitsuntide, yet would be hard put to it to explain the

significance of the occasion. Good Friday is for many people a day of profound religious import which affords an opportunity for a deep and moving spiritual experience; for others, it is just another holiday, an extra day added to the Easter weekend. For some, Hallowe'en is a time for telling ghost stories, and Michaelmas a curious adjective unaccountably attached to geese and daisies; to others these terms shine with a glory reflected from the hosts of heaven.

It seems there may well be a place for a book which offers a simple explanation of those Christian festivals and Saints Days which impinge upon the lives of ordinary people, whether or not they are professing Christians. Only these are dealt with here; for a more exhaustive treatment the enquirer will need to turn to one of the authoritative manuals issued by the Christian Churches. In the same way, the simple glossary which is appended does not claim to be a complete dictionary of Christian terminology. It has come into being in response to more than one request for a brief, straightforward explanation of words which everyday people come across and sometimes use, but the real sense of which often eludes them. It also includes some of the words which people writing on religious matters tend to use, taking it for granted that everybody understands their meaning. There are, of course, many gaps and omissions, but it is hoped that readers requiring more advanced information will be experienced enough to seek it in one of the standard works of reference to be found in all public libraries.

After long consideration, it has been decided to arrange the main section of the book, as well as the glossary, in alphabetical order. The Church Calendar will not be familiar to all, and in any case the movable feasts make arrangement by this method somewhat difficult. Alphabetical order, with the provision of cross references where required, should make the book simple



to use without, it is hoped, detracting from any interest it may afford for personal reading.

I am indebted to many people who have helped me in the course of my work on this book, including members of the staff at the Institute of Christian Education, who gave me warm encouragement and made helpful suggestions; Edward H. Milligan, the Librarian at Friends House, whose advice throughout has been invaluable; the Rev. J. K. Byrom, who so generously deposited a copy of C. B. Miles's *Christmas: its Ritual and Tradition* at my door, and who went to great trouble to provide me with information on certain points; the Rev. H. Lingham Lees, who has advised me most helpfully and provided me with many useful references; the Rev. David Twiddy, who lent me books and gave me information; the Rev. J. C. Bowmer, Archivist to the Methodist Historical Society, who helpfully directed me to necessary sources; the Rev. Gilbert Johnston, formerly of Newtonville, N.Y., who discussed the plan of this book with me at a very early stage; and Edith Fitton of Ackworth, who reminded me of the harvest sheaf for the birds at Ackworth Parish Church. A List of Books Consulted appears at the end of the book, and for many of these I am indebted to help received from the staffs of the British Museum Reading Room, the Library of the Society of Friends, Dr Williams's Library, Lancaster Municipal Library, and the Morecambe Branch of the Lancashire County Library where the Librarian, Miss P. M. Lawler, and others have gone to great trouble on my behalf. Members of my family circle have helped me at every stage, and I am grateful to Elizabeth Morris for all she has done to aid me in my researches and to assist in the preparation of the manuscript.

## *Feasts and Festivals*

*THE* feasts and festivals of the Christian Church fall naturally into three groups. In the first of these comes Sunday, the first day of the week and the oldest festival of all, for it dates back to apostolic times. 'And upon the first day of the week,' writes St Luke in the Acts of the Apostles (chapter 20, verse 7), 'when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.' Sunday was the day when the Early Christians regularly commemorated the Resurrection, and when more than at any other time they came together to worship, and it very soon took the place of the Jewish Sabbath (the seventh day of the week) as a day of rest and refreshment of spirit.

The English name, Sunday, is of pagan origin and denotes a day specially set apart for the worship of the sun; it was an easy matter to give this name a Christian interpretation and regard Sunday as a day specially set apart for the worship of Christ, the Son of Righteousness. The Puritans tended to identify Sunday with the Sabbath, and to impose strict rules governing its observance; these rules, which affected the whole nation in Commonwealth days, helped to give the British Sunday its special character, and though many changes have come, especially in modern times, they still have considerable influence. Today, some would favour abandoning all restraint, thus making Sunday a mere holiday, with the opportunity of church or chapel for those who felt inclined that way; others would impose a stricter discipline in the hope of countering



the exuberance which they feel is overbalancing our prosperous and easy-going life. Perhaps when considering the significance of Sunday we may feel that what matters most with this, as with all our Christian festivals, is that we should remember what the day is for and what it is about. 'Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy,' was the injunction given to the Hebrew tribes in the Ten Commandments. Holy means sacred, dedicated to God, or consecrated, and perhaps Sunday may be regarded as an opportunity for Christians to remember that their whole lives should be dedicated to God, and all their energies consecrated to His service. The Society of Friends has a few words to say to its members on this subject, in what are known as its General Advices: 'Remember the special opportunities for refreshment of spirit and for service which the first day of the week affords; use them faithfully as befits the friends of the Master whose name we bear.'

The second group of festivals includes all the Movable Feasts, which are fixed according to the date of Easter in any given year. Of these, Easter itself and Whitsuntide are very old indeed; in the early days of Christianity, they took the place of Jewish festivals of similarly varying dates, depending on the times of the Paschal full moon. The third group consists of those which have fixed dates, chief amongst them being Christmas and the Epiphany.

In the Middle Ages, the Christian festivals were not only part of the everyday life of the people, they were a constant source of inspiration and a means of instruction. Just as illiterate people became familiar with the stories of the Bible and the lives of the saints through frescoes and images, pictures in stained-glass windows, folk songs and ballads, and tableaux and dramatic representations in churches and cathedrals and city streets, so the regulation of their lives by Saints Days and festivals impressed upon them the teachings of the Gospel and

the story of the Christian Church. The very fact that these were not only holy days but holidays – the words were originally synonymous – made them all the more memorable, for these occasions gave colour to a hard-working existence. Though they sometimes descended into mere rowdiness and finished up with drunkenness, yet their religious significance was a very real part of the lives of everyday people.

After the Reformation, and especially with the rise of Puritanism, a tide of criticism began to sweep in with a simpler conception of the religious life. Many people felt it was time for men and women to return to the Gospel in its full purity, and to lay aside the ‘visual aids’ which the Church had evolved through the centuries. In the opinion of some, the aids had degenerated into hindrances. The great events and incidents and teachings of the Gospel should not, they thought, be confined to special occasions, but should permeate the whole of life. The great Puritan divine and Presbyterian leader, Thomas Cartwright (1535–1603) wrote concerning Easter: ‘The observing of the feast of Easter for certain days of the year doth pull out of our minds ere ever we be aware the doctrine of the Gospel, and causeth us to rest in that near consideration of our duties, for the space of a few days, which should be extended to all our life.’ The great Anglican theologian, Richard Hooker (1554–1601), replied to the criticism by reminding his fellow Christians that those duties of which Thomas Cartwright wrote, however much part of the Christian life at all times, must yet ‘have their several successions and seasons.’

Not many Christians at that time, and during the succeeding years, could arrive at the tolerance expressed by Isaac Penington (1616–1679), the cultured and scholarly Quaker, when he wrote: ‘Even in the apostles’ days, Christians were too apt to strive after a wrong unity and uniformity in outward practices



and observations, and to judge one another unrighteously in those things; and mark, it is not the different practice from one another that breaks the peace and unity, but the judging of one another because of different practices. He that keeps not a day may unite in the same Spirit, in the same life, in the same love, with him that keeps a day; and he who keeps a day may unite in heart and soul with the same Spirit and life in him who keeps not a day; but he that judges the other because of either of these errs from the same Spirit, from the love, from the life, and so breaks the bond of unity.'

After age-old dissensions and arguments on the correct days for the holding of festivals and the right ways of keeping them, wisdom began to prevail, and we now see the leaders of the great Christian churches drawing together in an endeavour to find out more of the Will of God, and the Way of Christ, and the Inner Life of the Spirit of which the great Christian festivals form one amongst countless manifestations.

## *Advent*

*THE* Christian Year begins with Advent. This is in itself surprising to many people unconnected with the churches, because it would seem to them more probable for the Christian Year to begin with Christmas. Everybody, they would say, knows about Christmas and that, whether rightly or wrongly, the birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated on that day; if His Coming was the most important event in history, as committed Christians would claim, then surely so far as Christianity is concerned, that is where everything begins.

All down the centuries, however, Christians have claimed that for so important a feast as Christmas, a time of preparation is needed – some would say, a time of fasting. Advent was at one time kept as a fast in preparation for Christmas, just as Lent is kept as a fast in preparation for Easter. It is one of the older seasons of the Church, though it began in a very simple way, towards the end of the fourth century, when at the Council of Saragossa, the faithful were enjoined to be unfailingly regular in their religious observances from the 17th of December until Epiphany. During the fifth century, the period was extended, and Advent became like Lent, lasting forty days and longer. At one time, it extended from Martinmas (November 11th) until Christmas Eve. Then gradually it was reduced in length, until by the ninth century it assumed more or less the form in which we know it today, lasting from the Sunday nearest St Andrew's Day (November 30th) until Christmas. In



the Eastern Church, however, it is still a much longer season, beginning in mid-November, and it continues to be regarded as a time for penitence and fasting. The Roman Catholic Church in England regards the four weeks of Advent as a time of great solemnity and enjoins fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, but in some other European countries so strict an observance is not customary. Perhaps for most of us the important thing is that we should be reminded of the preparation which confident expectation involves. 'But always the emergence, the incursion, the vernal equinox of the Spirit comes through some human individual or some prepared group,' wrote the American theologian and preacher, Dr Rufus M. Jones. 'It does not come as lightning out of the sky.'\*

Advent comes at a time when most people are intensely busy and preoccupied – parents with Christmas plans and preparations, housewives with Christmas fare, teachers and school-children with examinations and end-of-term celebrations, everybody with Christmas shopping, and many people with the multitudinous efforts for charities which crowd one upon another as Christmas draws near. Whether or not we celebrate the season of Advent, it may be well for us to remember the spiritual preparation which alone makes Christmas an enduring influence in our lives rather than an ephemeral glow of well-being and transient benevolence; a spiritual preparation which involves a sense of dedication, a willingness to give up at least a little of our time and thought and energy for the needs of others, and the sense of *caring* which is involved in obeying the injunction: 'Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.' In one of his letters, Baron von Hügel insisted that 'Caring matters most,' and perhaps this is one of the lessons of Advent, the season of preparation for our remembrance of One who loved us and gave Himself for us, and who was sent

\**The Luminous Trail*. Rufus M. Jones. Macmillan Co., New York.

into the world not to condemn it, but that it might be saved through Him.

Many of the observances and customs connected with Advent are intended to remind people of the Coming of Light into the world through Christ. Thus the season of Advent is often associated with the lighting of candles, the number increasing as the season progresses towards its climax. There is a lovely old custom, still kept up in some churches and occasionally in the home, whereby the Advent candles are set in a wreath of evergreens suspended from the ceiling by purple ribbons, which are exchanged for white ones at Christmas. There are four candles, one to be lit on the first Sunday in Advent and two on the second, so that on the fourth all are burning. There is an old tradition that the four weeks of Advent represent four Comings of Christ, the first in the flesh, the second in the hearts of men, the third at the death of each of His servants, and the fourth on Judgment Day. This links up with the idea that at Advent Christians remember not only the Coming of Christ, to be celebrated at Christmas, but His Second Coming. The Early Christians believed that Christ would return to earth in the lifetime of many who had known and loved Him, and St Paul's early epistles contain many references to this expectation. Before long the urgent note fades from his writings, to be replaced by a quiet confidence and the assurance that our duty as Christians is so to live that we may not be found wanting should that time come. The Second Coming is part of the teaching of many branches of the Christian Church; others would claim that it has already taken place, and that Christ is with us in the world today, loving us, comforting us, inspiring us, suffering with us, and saying eternally: 'In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

However we may feel about these things, and even if we



have only just begun to think about them, our hearts may well respond to the challenging words of St Paul which, for Roman Catholics, announce the coming of Advent: 'Brethren, it is high time to awaken out of sleep.'

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.

*Isaiah, Chapter 61, verses 1-3*

## *All Saints*

NOVEMBER I

*MOST* people in the English-speaking world are familiar with the festival dedicated to all the saints, but not necessarily because of the spiritual significance of the day. Another name for it is All Hallows, and many who have few thoughts to spare for saints and saintliness, whether of the past or of the present, join in the celebration of Hallowe'en. In doing so, they are probably taking part in observances which are far older than the Christian festival with whose name they are associated, for the beginning of the Celtic year fell on about this date, and the eve of the new year was a time for fortune-telling, the appearance of ghosts, and all manner of supernatural happenings. It was believed that evil spirits roamed the earth on this night, rejoicing in the waning of the sun's power and the coming of the long, dark winter. They would persecute poor humans, frightening them and playing malicious tricks on them, and the only hope of escape was to adopt some effective disguise and pass for a member of the spirit world.

In many districts, boys and girls still unconsciously maintain these age-old traditions by disguising themselves on Hallowe'en. They black their faces and wear fancy dress, or the clothes of the opposite sex. Wild pranks are played and all manner of mischief instigated in imitation of the roving spirits. As Hallowe'en draws near, the children hollow out large turnips to make turnip lanterns; carved with grotesque faces, these are furnished with lighted candles and slung on sticks, and then carried about in the darkness to the terror of the timid



and unwary, or held up to cottage windows in the hope of frightening the inhabitants. Many traditional games are associated with the festival, and these are still a feature of Hallowe'en parties. Most of them involve some element of discomfort or ridicule for the unskilled, and many have a pagan significance of which the participants are unaware. Prime favourites are apple-ducking and apple-bobbing. There are also traditional foods – parkin in the north of England, treacle toffee, apples and nuts.

Hallowe'en now links the Old World and the New, for just as country children in England vie with one another in the making of turnip lanterns, so American boys and girls make grinning faces out of pumpkins, and in American schools the classroom walls are bright with fearsome pictures of witches on broomsticks, and black cats, and witches' cauldrons. Boys and girls visit the neighbours' houses in disguise, both giving and receiving entertainment, and in recent years efforts have been made to harness some of this energy for charitable purposes by encouraging the children to collect gifts for children less fortunate than themselves.

Most of the Hallowe'en celebrations belong to the old pagan festival, but All Hallows, or All Saints Day itself is a day for great thankfulness of heart in remembering those who have upheld the Christian witness. The festival of All Saints was first observed in early summer, shortly after Whitsuntide, and this is still the time for its celebration in the Eastern Church. In the West, however, it was moved to November 1st by Pope Gregory III, who on that date dedicated a chapel in St Peter's, Rome, to all the Saints. Since then, all down the ages, men and women have given thanks on that day for all the Saints of God, not only for those who are known and honoured, but for those who, unknown and unacknowledged, have yet fought a good fight, and finished their course, and kept the faith.

## *All Souls*

NOVEMBER 2

*EXCEPT* in districts where children go 'soul-caking,' or 'souling,' All Souls Day is not as familiar a festival as All Saints. As a Christian festival, it dates only from the tenth century, but some of the customs traditionally associated with it are much older and have pagan origins. 'Soul cakes,' for example, may be connected with the feasts for the dead of which isolated cases survived within living memory in country districts, or with some propitiation of the Corn Spirit. Though soul cakes have for the most part vanished, a few of the traditional rhymes associated with them survive, and there are still places where children go round singing them – 'souling' – for apples or pennies.

Soul! Soul! for a soul cake!  
I pray, good missis, a soul cake!  
An apple or pear, a plum or a cherry,  
Any good thing to make us merry.  
One for Peter, two for Paul,  
Three for Him who made us all.

The festival of All Souls was instituted in response to a sense of need for masses and prayers to be said for the souls of the faithful departed. A pilgrim returning from Jerusalem reported to the Abbot of Cluny a terrifying vision in which he had seen the sufferings of those in Purgatory. As a result, the Abbot enjoined this special observance upon all the monastic houses



subject to Cluny. The idea quickly spread and became popular. The festival was eventually fixed for the day following All Saints, except when this happens to be a Sunday; on these occasions it is celebrated on November the third.

Many people like to visit their family graves on All Souls Day and place flowers on them, and this may be regarded as symbolical, for in faithful remembrance the good deeds of the past can flower again in other lives, long after the mistakes and tribulations have been forgotten. As so often happens, the actuality is more important than the symbol, and the significance of All Souls Day for most of us lies in thankfulness to God for the lives which have gone from us, and for the living reality of the Communion of Saints.

## *Anniversary Sundays*

*MANY* Nonconformist chapels, especially those belonging to branches of the Methodist Church, commemorate the anniversary of their foundation with special services and the engagement of special preachers – in parts of Lancashire, the occasion is referred to locally as ‘Sermons.’ Sometimes, though not invariably as in former days, there will be a procession, and often a social, or a communal meal. Posters are displayed outside the chapel so that all may know of the occasion, and in the hope that friends and neighbours may join with the congregation in thankfulness to God for the heritage of the past and the fellowship and service of the present. It can be an inspiring experience to attend such an Anniversary, and hear the full-throated singing from the congregation which customarily packs the chapel to the doors, but many older people seem to be discouraged by a falling-off in attendance and by the seeming indifference of those around them. They look back to their own early days, when ‘Sermons Day’ was the great event of the year, when every little girl had a new white frock and new hair ribbons, and when the congregation marched in proud procession through the streets, led by a brass band and carrying banners. To hold one of the strings which dangled from the great banners was an honour coveted by every child in the Sunday School.

Today we may do well to remember that an Anniversary Service is not only a time for thankfulness, but for re-dedication



and renewed inspiration, together with a realisation that the pioneering spirit of the founders is more than ever necessary in a world which, while hungering and thirsting for the eternal verities, demands a fresh approach.

ANNUNCIATION (*see Lady Day*)

## *Ascension Day*

*ASCENSION DAY* is one of the most important festivals of the Christian Year, and yet it impinges very little upon the lives of non-church-goers or even of Nonconformists. They may hear the church bells ringing, or see the children from church schools enjoying a holiday after service, but the celebration seems to be somewhat remote from their ordinary lives. Nevertheless, this day can have a very important and practical message for everybody.

Ascension Day marks the last of the earthly appearances of Christ after His Resurrection. It is celebrated on the sixth Thursday after Easter, which is the fortieth day, because the post-Resurrection period is believed to have lasted for forty days – in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we are told that Jesus showed Himself to the apostles ‘alive after His Passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.’ The Gospel according to St Luke tells how Jesus ‘lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God.’

The festival is an ancient one, going back to the fourth century, and a procession often formed part of the celebration, in remembrance of the journey to the Mount of Olives, whence the Ascension is believed to have taken place. In the Western



Church, and especially in the Roman Catholic community, the Paschal Candle, lit at liturgical functions throughout Easter-tide, is lighted for the last time on Ascension Day, and finally extinguished after the reading of the Gospel, which tells of the removal from the earth of Our Lord's visible presence.

To many, the story of the Ascension is one of eternal truth and lasting inspiration; to others, the physical fact is hard, or even impossible, to accept. Perhaps the inner message of Ascension-tide may come with a special force to these last, the inner message which was apparent to the disciples from the very first when, having lost the visible presence of their Lord and Master, they yet 'returned to Jerusalem with great joy.' They knew at last beyond all doubting that the 'joy which no man taketh from you' was theirs and would remain with them, and that for the rest of their lives they would walk in the Divine Companionship of Him in whose presence 'there is fulness of joy.'

When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

*The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 1, verses 6-9*

And He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

*St Luke, Chapter 24, verses 50-53*

## *Ash Wednesday*

*ASH WEDNESDAY* is the first day of Lent, and falls six and a half weeks before Easter. Unlike Shrove Tuesday (the eve of Lent, see page 161) this is an occasion of which many people seem to be quite unaware. The name may be familiar, but it is possible for a child to grow up with a vague idea that the day has some connection with trees – like Oak-apple Day (which, incidentally, is the anniversary of the Restoration in 1660 and commemorates the occasion when Charles the Second hid in an oak tree when escaping his pursuers after the battle of Worcester) or Arbor Day, which is the American day for the encouragement of tree planting. Ash Wednesday, however, has no connection with ash trees; the ashes are the ashes of repentance, and the day ushers in the forty-day fast of Lent (see page 88).

In Roman Catholic churches, an impressive and moving ceremony takes place on this day, when the priest makes the sign of the cross with ashes on the foreheads of the faithful. The ashes are obtained by burning the palms (see Palm Sunday, page 104) of the previous year and they are first blessed by the priest. Then the worshippers come forward and kneel at the altar, and the solemn declaration is made to each one: 'Memento, homo, pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris.' – 'Remember, O Man, that thou art dust and unto dust shalt thou return.' Though the ceremony of the Ashes does not take place in Protestant churches, the day is observed in both the



Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church of America.

In early days, the ceremony of the marking with ashes was reserved for public penitents, who were summoned to appear barefooted at the church door on the first day of Lent and do penance for their acknowledged sins. Their friends, however, tended to come with them in increasing numbers, partly in support of their erring brethren, and partly through consciousness of their own shortcomings, and so gradually this rite was extended to include the whole congregation. Thus Ash Wednesday serves as a useful reminder not only of the call to repentance, but of our Christian fellowship, which includes both the saint and the wrong-doer, and binds all together in a sense of common need for God's love and God's forgiveness.

## *Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

AUGUST 15

*THIS* feast is celebrated by the Roman Catholics and by the Eastern Church, but it is not officially observed by Protestants or included in the Book of Common Prayer, though it appears in the Oxford University Calendar. It became 'news' in 1950, when Pope Pius XII defined the doctrine of the bodily assumption of the Virgin as a dogma to be believed by all the faithful, declaring that when her days on earth were completed she was in body and soul assumed into heavenly glory. The Protestant world, for the most part, deplored this proclamation, feeling that it widened a gap which many devout men and women were trying to bridge; on the other hand, this was no new article of belief, but one which had long been held by the common folk of the Roman Catholic community.

Many High Anglicans observe this feast, often under the title by which it is known in the Eastern Church: 'The falling asleep of the Blessed Virgin.' They believe it brings to our remembrance the close of the Virgin Mary's life on earth, and testifies to her enjoyment of perpetual bliss in heaven. Others, who find their spiritual home neither in the Roman Catholic nor in the High Anglican fold, may yet find a significance in this festival as they remember that those who live nearest to heaven whilst on earth seem to have least far to go when they die, so that what happens to the body seems immaterial compared with the ecstasy of the break-through into paradise. 'And Enoch walked with God,' says the writer of the fifth chapter of the Book of Genesis. 'And he was not; for God took him.'



## *Candlemas*

FEBRUARY 2

*CANDLEMAS* is the old English name for the festival of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with which is joined the festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, both dating from the fourth century. The name is probably familiar to many who know nothing of either festival. It occurs here and there in English literature – ‘And thus it passed on from Candlemas until after Easter, that the month of May was come’ (Malory) – or in old folk rhymes about the winter season –

If Candlemas day be dry and fair  
The half o’ winter’s to come and mair.

This was obviously a festival which was very much a part of ordinary people’s lives in days gone by.

The name ‘Candlemas’ arose from the beautiful old custom – still observed in the Roman Catholic Church – of carrying lighted candles in procession, to remind people of the day when the aged Simeon took the infant Jesus in his arms ‘and blessed God, and said,

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,  
According to thy word:  
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,  
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;  
A light to lighten the Gentiles,  
And the glory of thy people Israel.’

In this ceremony, beeswax candles are blessed, distributed to the congregation, and lit whilst Simeon's words are being sung in the *Nunc Dimittis*; then they are carried in procession to commemorate the entrance of the Infant Christ, the True Light, into the Temple.

Thus Candlemas is associated always with thanksgiving and with light – thanksgiving after childbirth, thanksgiving for the gift of a son, and thanksgiving for the coming of the Light of the World. The old winter rhymes are fitting too, for they remind people that spring is coming, whether it be soon or late, and spring, like the light of Christ, brings life into the world.

And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (as it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,  
According to thy word:  
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,  
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;  
A light to lighten the Gentiles,  
And the glory of thy people Israel.

*St Luke, Chapter 2, verses 22-32*



## *Christmas*

DECEMBER 25

*CHRISTMAS* is the festival of Our Lord's Nativity, the most beloved of the religious festivals in the year. The birth date of Jesus was, of course, unrecorded, and it was not until early in the third century that people began to try to discover it. By A.D. 336, December the twenty-fifth was well established in Rome as the date for the commemoration of the anniversary of the Nativity, and the custom soon became general, though for many years the Eastern Church regarded the festival of the Epiphany on January the sixth (see page 56) as more important. The Armenian Church still celebrates the Nativity on January the sixth. Some scholars hold that December the twenty-fifth was chosen after careful calculations based on events recorded in the Bible, but others believe that the feast was fixed arbitrarily on that date in opposition to the pagan festival of *Natalis Solis Invicti*, which celebrated the passing of the winter solstice. Other pagan festivals which were celebrated in Rome at this time of year were the Saturnalia, which lasted from December the seventeenth until the twenty-third, and the Kalends of January, from January the first to the fifth. Some of the customs associated with these festivals eventually characterised the Christmas festivities – general goodwill and present-giving, hospitality, feasting and revelry, the decoration of houses with greenery, and also, unfortunately, drunkenness and buffoonery. Many of the popular features of the pagan festivals which are now dear to our hearts as peculiarly

belonging to the Christmas season were given a new significance and inner meaning: for instance, the decoration of the home with evergreens is said to be in memory of Christ who was the branch sprung from the stem of Jesse; the mince-meat enjoyed at Christmas is said to signify the spices brought by the Wise Men; and the present-giving is in memory of the offerings given to the Christ Child. The Christmas Tree, first popularised in England by the Prince Consort in Victorian days, though equally pagan in origin, combines many features which have grown to have Christian significance – the candles giving light in darkness, the fruitful branch, the offering of gifts. There are other old Christmas customs which would seem to have very little Christian significance – the making of ‘Kissing Boughs,’ for example, in the traditional pattern, with their burden of brightly-coloured fruits – and yet it is surely good to keep these up, because they link us with a forgotten world which only lives on in old customs such as these.

The old English name of Yule for Christmas derives from yet another old festival, northern in origin, about which very little is known. The word ‘Yule’ is believed to have signified noise, so it was probably a time of boisterous merry-making associated with the winter solstice.

In view of this age-old preoccupation with the coming of light after the darkness of winter, it is not surprising that the Christian Church should early have stressed the conception of Jesus as the true Light of the World, and taught mankind to remember at this time the Christ Child born in a stable, while angels sang *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* in a heaven made radiant by the Christmas star. Thus Christmas is, and has always been, a festival of Light, with a myriad candles burning and Yule logs blazing on unnumbered hearths. It matters little that these things are older than Christianity; they bring to the Gospel message the significance of race memory, symbolising the



eternal longing of mankind for light, and the eternal search for God. Old folk carols abound in references to candles and torches –

Torches, torches, run with torches  
All the way to Bethlehem!

is the refrain of an old Spanish carol, and another from Provence, with a lovely, haunting melody, calls for

Torches here, Jeanette, Isabella,  
Torches here to his cradle bring.

Fifteenth-century Londoners were ordered to hang lanterns outside their houses throughout the Christmas feast, each lantern to contain a lighted candle; twentieth-century New Englanders light up their houses, place candles in the windows, and hang strings of many-coloured fairy lights from tree to tree outside; and in the Moravian Church, on Christmas Eve, the children sing hymns, holding lighted candles in their hands. It ought not to be difficult for us to remember the Light that came into the world at Christmastide while ‘but a child sees heaven’s light in one poor candle’s gleam.’

Old Christmas carols and folk songs tell us much about Christmas customs and traditions. ‘*The twelve days of Christmas*’ reminds us of the duration of the feast – twelve days, from Christmas to Epiphany. ‘*Here we come a-wassailing*’ and other, similar songs tell us of the Christmas waits who sing from door to door, a custom which is still kept up in many places and which should not be allowed to die out. Some, like ‘*The bolly and the ivy*’ are of pagan origin; others, like ‘*As Joseph was a-walking,*’ bring home the simplicity of the Christmas story expressed in human terms –

He neither shall be born  
In housen nor in hall,

Nor in the place of paradise  
But in an ox's stall;

He neither shall be christened  
In white wine nor in red,  
But with fair spring water  
As we were christenéd.

In many of the old folk carols miracles occur and are taken for granted, so that the roasted cock stands up and crows on King Herod's dish, and visions of Mary and her Child are seen, and the animals and birds talk in human voices of heavenly wonders. The animal world has always been very much a part of Christmas, and the belief that the cattle kneel down on Christmas Eve as midnight approaches occurs in many countries, including our own. Thomas Hardy refers to it in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, where William Dewy 'called to mind how he'd seen the cattle kneel o' Christmas Eves in the dead o' night,' and again in his poem, *The Oxen*:

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.  
'Now they are all on their knees,'  
An elder said as we sat in a flock  
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where  
They dwelt in their strawy pen,  
Nor did it occur to one of us there  
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave  
In these years! Yet, I feel,  
If someone said on Christmas Eve,  
'Come; see the oxen kneel



'In the lonely barton by yonder coomb  
Our childhood used to know,'  
I should go with him in the gloom,  
Hoping it might be so.

'Hoping it might be so' may be laughed away as wishful thinking, but perhaps it speaks more than we know to the trouble in the heart of the modern Christmas merry-maker, who wonders if the Angel did indeed bring 'good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people,' and whether because of those good tidings we may, now and forever, 'fear not.'

The seventeenth-century Puritans were so convinced that Christmas had lost its meaning in a senseless orgy of gluttony and licentiousness that they tried to do away with it altogether. They set an example, when they were in power, by expecting Parliament to meet on Christmas Day as usual – which it did from 1644–1656. The Quakers did not celebrate Christmas either; they held that no one day was more sacred or more special than another, and that the spiritual rebirth of Christ in the heart was more important than His earthly Nativity, so that every day should be a day of thankfulness for the coming of Christ into the world. They opened their shops and went about their work as usual on Christmas Day, and earned a good deal of criticism by doing so. Today the sects which are descended from the Puritans, and also the Quakers, celebrate Christmas with their fellow Christians, though not all have special services in their places of worship. And their steadfast testimony to the inner meaning of Christmas has probably done a great deal to prevent the spiritual message from being overwhelmed in the merry-making.

For many Christians, Christmas starts with the vigil of the midnight mass, for others with the service on Christmas morning in a village church decked with holly and evergreens.

For some it starts even earlier with the King's College Service of Nine Lessons and Carols over the radio on Christmas Eve; for others in a period of family worship with the reading of the first part of the second chapter of the Gospel according to St Luke. For those who frequent neither church nor chapel, and who switch the radio to another programme when a service is being broadcast, Christmas brings every year the unspoken question: Is Christmas merry-making enough for us? Does it satisfy us? Because if so, we may as well be honest with ourselves and celebrate instead one of the old pagan festivals. But if we feel there may be an inner meaning which has eluded us, a message which has fallen on deaf ears, then the second chapter of the Gospel according to St Luke is as good a place as any in which to look for it.

'I will love Christmas in my heart,' said the repentant Scrooge in Dickens's *Christmas Carol*, 'and try to keep it all the year.' Many people think that Charles Dickens did more than anybody else to establish the modern Christmas. And there is no doubt that if his conception of Christmas were to be kept 'all the year,' both the Catholic and the Puritan image of Christmas would be fulfilled. 'I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round – apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that – as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely.' When the 'good time' is no longer the 'only time', perhaps mankind will be a little nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven.

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also



went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David;) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth, peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they make known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

*St Luke, Chapter 2, verses 1-20*

## *Corpus Christi*

*THIS* feast, which is one of the important festivals of the Roman Catholic Church, is familiar to a great many people because of its association with the mediaeval Miracle Plays. Nowadays, these have more than an academic interest, for some of the more important cycles have been revived in modern times, so that tourists have had first-hand experience of their beauty and their message. In especial, the York cycle has been performed at regular intervals to audiences coming from all over the world; there could be no more perfect setting than the ruins of St Mary's Abbey for this moving pageantry. To all who see the Miracle Plays performed, or read about them, or hear about them at school, the idea is familiar that they were originally performed regularly on Corpus Christi Day, and many must surely wonder what the significance of this particular festival may be and why it should have been chosen for these dramatic representations of the Bible story.

Corpus Christi is a feast designed to commemorate the institution of the Eucharist. This was originally remembered on Maundy Thursday (see page 93) but during the Middle Ages the feeling spread that this was not a day on which the institution of the sacrament could be fittingly celebrated, because it fell in Holy Week. In 1215, the Doctrine of Transubstantiation – the transformation of the bread and wine of the Sacrament into the Body and Blood of Christ – was officially proclaimed by Pope Innocent III, and ten years later a Belgian nun, the



Blessed Juliana of Liège, became convinced, in response to a vision, that a special feast should be instituted. She was eventually supported in this by a canon of Liège, who brought the matter to the attention of the Bishop and won his approval. The feast was sanctioned in 1264 by Pope Urban IV, who died before his decree was promulgated, and it was finally instituted at the Council of Vienna in 1311. Thus Corpus Christi was one of the later festivals to be promulgated, but it swiftly became recognised as one of the more important ones, and so was celebrated with great magnificence. It became customary for the Host – the consecrated Bread – to be carried at the head of a gorgeous procession. Very soon, in the larger towns, the trade guilds began to take part officially, each one forming a part of the procession, headed by its distinctive banner. Thus, when the guilds took over the Miracle Plays, which had at first been performed inside the larger churches and then outside them, generally on the steps before the great western door, they naturally became associated with this festival, and so on Corpus Christi Day, the narrow streets of the mediaeval towns became resplendent with the pageantry and the poetry of one of the mainsprings of our English drama.

The drama lived on to become one of the chief glories of the English nation. The feast was suppressed by the Reformed Churches, which rejected the Doctrine of Transubstantiation. It still holds an important place in the calendar of the Roman Catholic Church, and great processions in honour of the day are a feature of its celebration in many countries. There are Anglicans who regret its omission from the calendar, and many Anglican churches do celebrate it, but perhaps its lesson may survive most of all in the realisation that the Presence of Christ in our lives can be the source not only of holiness, but of beauty and colour and the true magnificence of life lived on a large plane.

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: This is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

*St Mark, Chapter 14, verses 22-26*



## *Covenant Sunday*

*I*N the Methodist Church, the first Sunday of the year is Covenant Sunday. At one time, people outside the Methodist Church, though probably familiar with the name, would know very little of the nature of the occasion. However, now that the various branches of the Christian Church are drawing closer together and learning to share their great heritage, the value of Covenant Sunday is beginning to be recognised, and already the United Church of South India has adopted the festival as a valuable contribution to the life of their communion.

The idea of a Covenant between man and God is, of course, far older than Christianity. It is the vital part of the message of the Old Testament, growing in strength and purity until it loses all its primitive sense of a bargain between a vengeful God and a wayward people, and becomes the 'New Covenant' described by the prophet Jeremiah, the mainspring of a God-inspired nation: 'This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'\*

\* Jeremiah, Chapter 31, verses 33-34

The puritan theologians of the seventeenth century found a continual source of inspiration in this conception of a covenant between man and God. They expressed it in the life of Church and state and congregation: the National Covenant of the Scottish Presbyterians in 1638 upheld their Reformed Church against the efforts of Charles I and Archbishop Laud to impose the Prayer Book and liturgy; the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 sought not only to maintain Presbyterianism in Scotland but to establish it in England and to uphold the rights of Parliament; the early covenants of the Congregationalists were the basis of the life of each congregation, solemn engagements made between the members in the sight of God.

In 1658, a young Presbyterian minister, Joseph Alleine, began to use a form of covenant for young converts. His father-in-law, Richard Alleine, included this in his writings, together with certain directions to be used in preparation for the making of a covenant. On these, in the following century, John Wesley based his Covenant Service, which was first instituted in 1755, when, so he wrote in his journal, 'we met for that purpose in the French Church in Spitalfields. After I had recited the tenor of the covenant proposed, in the words of that blessed man, Richard Alleine, all the people stood up, in testimony of assent, to the number of about eighteen hundred persons.'

Wesley published his Covenant Service in 1780, and it was used without alteration for nearly a century. The present form is adapted from it, but gives the congregation a more active share in the devotions attendant upon the making of the covenant. The covenant itself is simply expressed and deeply moving; there is nothing in it which any professed Christian would not be the better for saying sincerely from his heart, no matter to which branch of the Christian Church he belonged.



'I am no longer my own, but Thine. Put me to what Thou wilt, rank me with whom Thou wilt; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for Thee or laid aside for Thee, exalted for Thee or brought low for Thee; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and heartily yield all things to Thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Thou are mine, and I am Thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.'

## *Dedication Festivals*

*THE* first recorded instance of the celebration of a Dedication Festival comes from Jerusalem, where the anniversary of the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was celebrated during the fourth century. It became customary for churches to celebrate the Feast of their Dedication where the actual date was known, but as in so many cases this was uncertain, an order was made in the English Church that the first Sunday in October should be kept as a Feast of Dedication for all churches where the date of consecration was unknown. In the Roman Catholic Church the dedication feasts of the four principal churches in Rome – the Lateran, San Pietro in Vaticano, San Paolo fuori le mure and Santa Maria Maggiore – are observed by all the faithful.



## *Eastertide*

*E*ASTER is the Feast of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the oldest feast of the Christian Church and the greatest of them all. Its English name is believed to have been derived from that of a Saxon goddess, Éastre (the German Osterâ), the Goddess of Dawn. The Venerable Bede (673-735) explained that the Spring months, the time of the Spring feast, was known as Eosturmonth, and so naturally the great Christian festival falling during that period was known as Easter. Most of the other Christian nations use words derived from the Latin pascha, which itself derives from the Hebrew word for the Passover, pesakh, from pāsakh, to pass over. The French pâques and the Italian pasqua are both derivatives of pascha; so is the old English word pasch, now seldom used except in its adjectival form or in dialect - 'paschal candle,' 'paschal moon,' 'pasch Monday,' 'pace eggs,' etc.

Because of the supreme importance of this festival, and because of its original association with the Jewish Passover, the date on which it should be celebrated gave rise to a good deal of controversy in the early days of Christianity. To many it would have seemed the natural thing to link Easter with the Passover, which is commemorated on a fixed day of the lunar month. This, however, would have meant celebrating it without regard to the day of the week on which it fell, and though the Church in Asia Minor saw no difficulty in this, the Roman Church felt that the peculiarly sacred association of the Resur-

rection with Sunday was more important, for it was a commonly held belief that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Thus varying methods of calculation were practised, all of which resulted in fixing Easter Day on a Sunday, but not always the same Sunday, and these divergencies caused dissension in the first centuries of the Christian Church. One of the main disputes between the Celtic and the Roman Churches in England rose from their different methods for calculating the date of Easter; the adherents of one would be fasting on what they held to be Palm Sunday while the adherents of the other would be feasting and rejoicing at their Easter festival. The missionaries of both churches brought incalculable benefits to England which have enriched the national life from their day to our own, but they could not agree or work together, and in 664 their differences had to be resolved, once and for all, at the Synod of Whitby, when the Roman procedure was adopted. As a result, the influence of the Celtic Church in England waned, but all that was best in its tradition lived on, to be renewed in modern times by the vigorous missionary spirit of the age-old Celtic stronghold of Iona, on the west coast of Scotland.

The festival of Easter is now celebrated on the Sunday after the first full moon following the Spring equinox, and its date falls between March the twenty-first and April the twenty-fifth. The eve of the festival is a time of preparation and worship, and in the Eastern Church it is customary to keep vigil all night long, until on Easter morning the joyful cry rings out: 'Christ is risen!' In many countries 'Christ is risen!' is the customary greeting on Easter Morning, with the triumphant reply: 'He is risen indeed!' Similar phrases form part of the Moravian service held before sunrise on Easter Morning, when the minister says: 'The Lord is risen!' and the congregation replies: 'He is risen indeed!' When the sun rises all join in a



great procession, and emerge joyfully from the church to conclude their service in the light of the new day.

In the Early Christian Church, new converts were baptised on Easter Eve, and the watchnight service thus had a solemn and dedicatory significance. As this procedure fell into disuse, the importance of the occasion dwindled and the ceremony grew to be less meaningful, until eventually in the Western Church it became customary for the Holy Saturday service to be held in the morning. In modern times, however, the Easter vigil has been restored, and the Roman Catholic Church in particular has a ceremony of touching and symbolical significance, with the striking of new fire from flint and the blessing of the flame, the lighting of the Paschal Candle which stands for Christ, the Light of the World, the solemn procession through the church, the blessing of the font water and the renewing of the baptismal vows, all culminating in the great midnight mass of Easter Morn. The Paschal Candle stands on the north side of the sanctuary and is lit for liturgical functions throughout Eastertide; it is lit for the last time on Ascension Day (see page 29) when it is extinguished after the reading of the Gospel.

The symbolism of light and fire has been associated with Easter from very early times. In the old Celtic Church it was customary to light fires at nightfall on Easter Eve; it was essential that these should be lit by flints, and not by using brands from dying embers. One of the stories told of St Patrick shows how old this symbolism of fire is – much older than Christianity. Patrick had resolved to keep Easter at Tara, where the Ard Ri – the High King – held court, and where at this time of year the great Celtic fire festival was held to celebrate the coming of Spring, bringing new life into the world. Every fire on every hearth had to be quenched, and then all were re-lit from the sacred flames of the new fire kindled at

dawn at Tara. But before the light of the High King's fire leapt across the plain, the Paschal fire lit by St Patrick glowed from the hilltop of Slane, and not all the raging of the High King and his druids could put it out. Thus new life did indeed come into the pagan world with the Easter message, and the symbolism of fire and light lives on to speak to age-old memories in the human race, and link up the searchings of the past with the certainties of the eternal Gospel.

Another ancient symbol, far older than Christianity, but now inseparably associated with Easter, is that of the egg. The egg is held to be symbolical of the Resurrection, because it holds within it the secret of new life, but its significance goes far back into the history of the race. So do many of the customs familiar to us today: the giving of eggs, the colouring of eggs, and the mysterious rite of egg-rolling. 'Pasch Monday' is the day for egg-rolling, and though this custom has died out in some parts of the country, it is still active in others, and children are given 'pace eggs' and then vie with one another in rolling them down the nearest hillside and eating them afterwards. Pace eggs are hard-boiled eggs, not chocolate ones, and they are almost invariably dyed or painted. In the districts where pace-egging survives, the dyeing or painting of the eggs is a traditional craft, and North Country Women's Institutes in especial, will often hold pace egg competitions which attract many interesting and colourful exhibits. Some years ago an exhibition of this craft, in a small North Country village, was transported to a South Country museum in a district where, apparently, pace-egging had died out. The custom is, however, kept up in many parts of the north of England, in Scotland and in Northern Ireland; in Northumberland it is known as 'booling.' Perhaps the best-known centre for pace-egg rolling is Preston, in Lancashire, where for six hundred years the citizens have indulged in a massive communal pace-egging



ceremony, possibly only to be rivalled in the historic egg-rolling ceremony which takes place in Washington, in the grounds of the White House. Like many other old English customs, pace-egging crossed the Atlantic with the early settlers and took root in America. Pace-egging plays, however, seem almost to have died out, though the rhymes associated with them are still familiar, and children in the north of England sometimes sing them for pennies or pace eggs.

Much of the significance of Easter has been buried deep for everyday people by the great wave of commercialism characteristic of our age. Elaborate cardboard eggs disgorge expensive toys, and chocolate eggs become increasingly ornate and costly; the Easter bonnet contributes charm and beauty to the scene; and the Easter holiday has become an occasion for far-flung travel and also, unfortunately, for a mounting toll of road accidents. The sight of the shops decked out with Easter novelties and Easter fashions tempts one to believe the story of the indignant matron who, on reading a poster outside church, exclaimed bitterly: 'Why, they're trying to bring religion into *Easter* now!' But the Easter message continues to hold out its eternal promise to mankind, reminding us that 'if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,' and inspiring us with the sublime assurance that Christ is indeed risen, and that nothing, 'neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.'

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They

have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou has laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

*St John, Chapter 20, verses 1-19*



## *Ember Days*

*THERE* are four groups of Ember Days, coinciding with the four seasons of the year: they consist of the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday following December 13th, the first Sunday in Lent, Whitsuntide and September 14th. They are intended to be days of fasting and abstinence, and they were originally designed so that the faithful might be reminded, before Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, to repent of their sins and to invoke God's blessing upon the coming season. The Ember Days for Spring, Summer and Autumn are believed to be of very ancient origin and may have superseded pagan festivals.

It is generally thought that the name 'ember' is derived from the Latin 'quatuor tempora,' meaning 'four seasons,' which became shortened to 'quatember' and so to 'ember.' Another explanation is that it derives from the Anglo-Saxon 'Ymbren,' or 'Ymb-ryner' meaning a 'running round' and thus a circuit of the year. Popular explanations recall the old custom of eating no bread on these days save for a kind of cake baked under the ashes, or else take refuge in the simpler suggestion that the name was given because embers, or ashes, signify repentance.

The four groups of Ember Days are now associated with the ordination of ministers, which in the Anglican Church takes place on the Sunday after these seasonal feasts, but they may still serve to remind us of the need for personal dedication, not only for those engaged in the ministry, but for all who seek to know God and serve their fellow men.

## *Epiphany*

JANUARY 6

*THE* word 'Epiphany' is derived from a Greek word meaning a 'manifestation' or a 'showing forth.' Thus the central theme of the festival of the Epiphany is the manifestation of Christ's glory. It is important to remember this, because the two great branches of the Christian Church, in the East and in the West, interpret this festival very differently, yet in its essential meaning they are at one.

In the Eastern Church, the birth of Christ is remembered at this time, together with the adoration of the Magi and, above all, the baptism of Jesus when, so it is believed, His Glory was revealed as 'He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and there came a voice from heaven, saying, 'Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' So important is the commemoration of our Lord's baptism in the Eastern Church, that much of the ceremonial and many of the ancient customs and traditions connected with the feast are concentrated upon the symbolism of water. The solemn blessing of the baptismal water, which in the Roman Catholic Church is now amongst the rites enjoined for Holy Saturday, is in the Eastern Church of supreme importance at the Epiphany. Moreover, the blessing of local rivers in commemoration of the hallowing of the Jordan by the Baptism of Christ is a very ancient custom which may well date back to pre-Christian days, having its origin in some primitive rite connected with water and fertility.



The best known of these ancient ceremonies in which local rivers are blessed is probably that of the 'blessing of the Neva.' An interesting description of this ceremony survives in a letter written early in the eighteenth century by a young English Quaker, George Edmondson, who was at this time engaged with Daniel Wheeler in the reclamation of the Crown lands near Petersburg, now Leningrad. He describes the procession of priests, and the great crowds assembling to watch the ceremony, which took place on the frozen Neva, where a large hole had been cut in the ice, at that time of the year about two or three feet thick. After reading a passage from the Bible, a priest dipped a hollow cross into the water three times, and those who stood near enough to catch some of the drops from it as it emerged, were held to be especially fortunate. Then he dipped a bundle of birch twigs into the river and sprinkled the faithful with it. Lastly he baptised the infants who were brought to him by their devout mothers, sure that immersion in the hallowed water would bring their children an especial blessing. One after another the babies were plunged into the icy waters until, to the young Englishman's horror, the priest lost his grip on one little foot and the infant was carried away by the swift flowing current and lost to sight under the ice. 'The Lord has taken it!' he said, as he held out his hand for the next baby, and the young man watching the scene marvelled to see how the mother – probably numbed by the shock – seemed comforted at the assurance of Paradise for her child.

In the West, the Roman Catholic Church commemorates at this time what they feel to be a three-fold manifestation of Christ's Glory: The Adoration of the Magi; the baptism of Jesus; and the miracle of changing water into wine at Cana in Galilee. Nevertheless, for most Western Christians the significance of the festival has become centred in the adoration of the Magi – more often known as the Wise Men or the Three Kings

— and thus in the manifestation of Christ's Glory to the Gentiles. This makes the inner meaning of the Epiphany both personal and world-wide: personal, in the sense that it implies recognition and adoration, and world-wide because it brings in all nations and all races — one of the Magi is traditionally represented as a Negro. Guided by the mysterious star, they journeyed to Bethlehem, where they knelt before the young child with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and ever since that day mankind has been seeking the same solace and the same redemption.

Perhaps this is a point where East and West may meet, for the old Russian legend of the Baboushka surely depicts this age-old search. 'Come with us!' called the Wise Men as they passed her door, but she shook her head and said she would come later when her work was done. And when her work was done it was too late, for the light of the star had faded and she could not find the way. All down the centuries, so the legend said, she has been seeking for the Christ-child, and all down the centuries she has brought gifts to little children for His sake. Perhaps this old story has a message for men and woman who have no time for religion, and peoples who allow prosperity or greed or economic development to crowd Christ out of their lives, and nations who pile up armaments against one another and yet long for a peaceful world. Perhaps we shall all have to take the hard way in the end, and make the long journey which ends in sacrifice.

And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

*St Mark, Chapter 1, verses 9-11*



Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

‘And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda,  
Art not the least among the princes of Juda:  
For out of thee shall come a Governor,  
That shall rule my people Israel.’

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

*St Matthew, Chapter 2, verses 1-12*

*(See also Twelfth Night, page 167)*

## *Good Friday*

*GOOD FRIDAY* is the English name for the Friday before Easter, on which the anniversary of the Crucifixion is kept. The name is believed by some to signify 'God's Friday,' and by others to commemorate the good which Jesus brought into the world. In Anglo-Saxon times it was known as Long Friday, possibly because of the length of the services with which it was celebrated. It is intended as a day for fasting and repentance, and for remembering the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. The severity of the fast has been much mitigated in modern times and many people nowadays regard Good Friday as just another day added to the Easter holiday. Nevertheless it is still customary for fish to be eaten rather than meat, and few families forego their hot cross buns on Good Friday morning. These were formerly flat, unleavened buns, marked with a cross and not very appetising, but intended to represent the bread eaten by Jesus at the Passover. In their modern form, however, hot cross buns are spicy and delicious, though still marked with a cross to remind us of their original significance.

Many of the Good Friday observances in the Western Church go back to those which developed in the Church of Jerusalem during or immediately before the fourth century. For instance, the ceremonial Veneration of the Cross, or 'Creeping to the Cross,' which is customary in the Roman Catholic Church, derives from the ancient Good Friday ceremony in Jerusalem, where Christians gathered at the Sanctuary



of the Cross and passed in procession before what was believed to be a fragment of the True Cross, each in turn bowing before it and kissing the wood. In the observance of Creeping to the Cross, in Roman Catholic and sometimes in High Anglican usage, the crucifix is placed on the Sanctuary Steps, and priests and people advance in slow procession, in attitudes of penitence, and kneel to kiss it. This custom was generally observed in the days before the Reformation, when clergy and congregation would prostrate themselves before a cross placed in front of the altar. According to an early proclamation of Henry VIII, 'On Good Friday it shall be declared howe Creepynge of the Crosse signifieth an humblynge of our selfe to Christe before the Crosse, and kysynge of it as a memorie of our redemption made upon the Crosse.'

On Good Friday, it is customary in Roman Catholic Churches for the altar to be draped in black, and for other signs of mourning to be observed. Prayers are said, not only for the Church itself and for all sorts and conditions of men, but for heretics, schismatics and pagans. From noon to three o'clock a three-hour service is held, during which the last words from the Cross are read and opportunity given for meditation and prayer. This service has been adopted in varying forms by the Anglican Church.

Some of the Nonconformist churches hold services on Good Friday, but others have no special observance for this day, apart from the private devotions of their adherents. Many people feel themselves to be a little aloof from the significance of this occasion, as if it were a mystery which only the initiated can be expected to understand. There are, indeed, no limits to the mystery of Good Friday, and possibly we may never fully comprehend it on this side of the grave, yet the saintly American Quaker, John Woolman (1720-1772), whose writings Charles Lamb exhorted his readers to get by heart, showed the way to

an understanding which is surely open to all who seek it in humility and sincerity. Once, during a severe illness, he was so ill that he forgot his name, and the more he sought to know it, the more he became aware of the sufferings of humanity, 'and that I was mixed with them, and that henceforth I might not consider myself as a distinct or separate being.' At last he heard a heavenly voice declaring: 'John Woolman is dead.' For long he lay pondering over this experience, wondering what its meaning might be, until next morning all became clear. 'I felt divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak, and then said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, is by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Thus the mystery was opened, and I perceived there was joy in heaven over a sinner who had repented, and that that saying, *John Woolman is dead* meant no more than the death of my own will.'

Perhaps in this life that is as near as we can get to the message of Good Friday for each one of us.

And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they called together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his



cross. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not. And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors. And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

*St Mark, Chapter 15, verses 15-39*

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast

lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour, and the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

*St Luke, Chapter 23, verses 33-49*



## *Grace Before Meals*

*SOME* may feel that this section is curiously misplaced, for surely the private devotions which constitute grace before meals are solely the concern of the individual. On the other hand, there are many Christians who would claim that every occasion when a family, or a household, or a community comes together to break bread can be regarded as a religious festival of a deeply sacramental nature. Whether the participants adopt the Latin grace used in places of learning, the set forms of the Catholic or of the Anglican, the extempore grace of the Non-conformist or the silent grace of the Quaker; whether they stand, or sit with bowed heads, or cross themselves, they are joining in the common thanksgiving, the common prayer, the common dedication – thanksgiving for the daily bread, prayer for the needs of others and dedication to the service of the Master – which constitute the simplest and the oldest festival of all.

Stephen Grellet, the great American Quaker preacher and former French aristocrat, expressed the nature of this daily festival in a way which brings home its true and deepest significance. ‘I think I can reverently say that I very much doubt whether since the Lord by His grace brought me into the faith of His dear Son, I have ever broken bread or drunk wine, even in the ordinary course of life, without devout remembrance of, and some devout feeling regarding the broken body and the blood-shedding of my dear Lord and Saviour.’

Few would claim to experience this to the full at every common meal, and many would feel too humble to suggest that in the rush of modern life it is even possible fully to enter into it, yet the ideal is there, and in the thanksgiving, the prayer and the dedication, and above all the realisation of the Presence of the Divine Guest at the family table, our lives may at every meal be brought nearer to Jesus Christ, who made Himself known to His disciples at Emmaus in the breaking of bread.

And they drew nigh to the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of bread.

*St Luke, Chapter 24, verses 28-35*



## *Harvest Festivals*

*THIS* is an unofficial but widely observed festival, held during September or early October, to offer up thanks to God for the fruits of the earth. It is now common to Anglicans and Non-conformists alike, and is a very popular occasion in Sunday schools of all persuasions.

The practice of holding harvest festivals grew up gradually in the late eighteenth century and was well established by the middle of the nineteenth century, by which time it had begun to replace the traditional Harvest Home. One of the prime movers in the Anglican Church for the institution of such a festival was the eccentric vicar of Morwenstow in Cornwall, the Reverend R. S. Hawker, who in 1843 issued a notice to his parishioners, setting aside the first Sunday in October as an opportunity for thanking God for their good harvest. In 1862 the Convocation of Canterbury issued a form of service for use in the Church of England, after which the practice of holding harvest festivals became general.

Harvest festivals often provide an opportunity for helping others in need. Prayers are offered for people in under-developed countries, refugees, and the homeless and starving. Fruit and flowers are taken to local invalids, and elderly people, or the hospitals and children's homes. Sometimes provision is made for the needs of animals or birds. At Ackworth Parish Church, in Yorkshire, a small sheaf of corn is placed above the porch, by the statue of St Cuthbert, to whom the church is dedicated. Thus St Cuthbert's feathered friends, his faithful

and loving companions during his retirement in the Farne Islands, are remembered in this celebration, and the birds of the district are fed at the church door, in memory of them and of the saint who loved them.

A country church or chapel looks very attractive when decked out for the harvest festival with richly coloured autumn flowers, and berried branches, and fruit and vegetables from people's orchards and gardens. Yet it is in the country that questions are sometimes asked about the appropriateness of holding such festivals in times of drought or mammoth rainfall, when perhaps the local harvest has been ruined. Nevertheless, the countryman knows, even in the face of adversity, that the ancient covenant still stands, that 'while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.'

There is a story about the man whose flourishing allotment drew forth praise from all and sundry, and especially from a cleric who rather patronisingly remarked: 'See what a wonderful work you and God have done together!'

'Eh,' said the man, 'tha should have seen it when God had it all to Hissen!'

The story remains funny only until we remember that the harvest, like everything else is a partnership, and that when we thank God for it we also need to thank Him for the health, the strength, the brain, the sight and the energy which have enabled us to fulfil our share of that partnership.

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

*Genesis, Chapter 8, verse 22*

And God said, this is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for



perpetual generations: I do set my bowl in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bowl shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the water shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bowl shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

*Genesis, Chapter 9, verses 12-16*

## *Hocktide*

*THE* name of this curious mediaeval festival, held on the Monday and Tuesday after the second Sunday after Easter, occurs in dialect or in ancient customs. For instance, it is familiar to many because of the Hocktide tutti-men of Hungerford in Berkshire, who go round the houses with flowers and oranges on poles, claiming kisses. It does not seem, however, to have been mainly connected with the collecting of kisses but of rents, which in rural areas were paid half-yearly at Michaelmas and Hocktide, which thus between them divided the rural year into two halves. 'Hocking' was a mediaeval game which involved catching members of the opposite sex with ropes and demanding forfeits: on one day the women 'hocked' the men and on the next the men 'hocked' the women. This pastime was frowned on in the towns, where doubtless it caused a good deal of confusion in the narrow streets; in the fifteenth century the City of London made definite objections to 'hocking.' Another form of 'hocking' popular in country districts involves stretching a long rope across the road and demanding toll of all who pass; the money gained in this way was often used for parish expenses. The practice ceased early in the eighteenth century.

The word 'Hocktide' was used in a curious way in Yorkshire at one time, when it was customary to speak of 'making Hocktide' over somebody – denoting extreme unpopularity. It was the custom in certain areas to commemorate anybody who was



universally disliked by holding sports and games on the anniversary of his death, preferably as near as possible to his former home. This sounds a somewhat sour old custom, though perhaps psychologically it might be considered as good a way as any of sublimating feelings of hatred or revenge.

# *Holy Cross Day* *or* *Rood Mass*

SEPTEMBER 14

*THIS* festival is also known as the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. It is of Palestinian origin and commemorates the exposition of the relic of what was held to be the very cross upon which Christ suffered, after its recovery from the Persians by the Emperor Heraclius. This precious portion of the Holy Cross had been carried off by Chosroes, King of Persia, in 614, with other plunder from Jerusalem, and to the consternation of the faithful it had been treated as an object of derision. In 629, however, it was brought back to Jerusalem by Heraclius, returning in triumph after his victorious campaign. On his arrival at the Holy City, he is said to have found the gates closed against him, and as he waited for them to be opened, he heard a voice from heaven, reminding him that the King of Kings had not sought to enter the city in splendour but in meek and lowly guise, riding upon an ass. Heraclius straightway dismounted and entered the city barefoot, carrying the sacred relic upon his shoulder.

Holy Cross Day commemorates this event, though not in the springtime of the year, which is when it actually occurred. The commemoration became confused with a much older festival, which celebrated the anniversary of the dedication, in 335, of the basilicas erected by Constantine on the sites of Calvary and of the Holy Sepulchre. On Holy Cross Day, or Rood Mass, both these festivals are now combined.

These events may seem to be somewhat remote from every-



day life and thus to have little to say to us in modern times. Nevertheless, the occasion may be taken as one for especially remembering the Cross of Christ as the supreme symbol of love and self-sacrifice. This is something which properly belongs to every day of our lives. 'At every step and moment,' said Tertullian in the second century, 'whenever we come in or go out, when we dress and put on our shoes, at bath, at table, when lights are brought in, or lying or sitting down, whatever employment engages our attention, we sign ourselves with the sign of the Cross.' And whether we accept this in the literal sense, or whether we accept it symbolically, the challenge of the Cross remains with us, as it remained with those first disciples to whom Jesus said: 'If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'

When I survey the wondrous Cross  
Where the young Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small,  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

*Holy Innocents*  
*or*  
*Childermas*

DECEMBER 28

*THE* festival of the Holy Innocents, or Childermas, commemorates the wholesale massacre of the male infants of Bethlehem, ordered by Herod the Great in the hope of destroying the Holy Child. Though doubts have been cast upon the veracity of the story, it is fully in keeping with the ruthless spirit of the times, and also with what is known of Herod during his last, disease-ridden years.

In mediaeval times, Childermas was held to be an unlucky day. The coronation of Edward IV had to be postponed when it was realised that the date originally chosen happened to be Childermas. In many parts of the British Isles there was a belief that any task begun on that day would never be finished, or would be dogged by ill luck, and in some districts housewives even refrained from scrubbing and washing and cleaning. At one time children must heartily have disliked the day, for it was considered salutary to give them a good whipping, that they might better remember the sufferings of the Holy Innocents. This custom appears to have lasted at least until the seventeenth century.

Holy Innocents Day is above all associated with the rule of the Boy Bishop, customarily elected upon St Nicholas Day, December the sixth (see page 147), or on St Nicholas Eve. During the Middle Ages this was a widespread custom in cathedrals, monasteries and schools, and in some of the larger rural parishes. It was suppressed by Henry VIII, revived by



Mary I, and finally done away with by Elizabeth I. In cathedral cities at Childermas, the Boy Bishop and his attendants would be given a feast, after which they would parade through the streets of the town in procession, so that the 'Bishop' might bless the people. In many places he was expected to preach a sermon, and in some he had the right to appoint the church dignitaries to minor offices, as candle-bearers or acolytes. Inevitably, all manner of lively and, in some instances, irreligious customs grew up in connection with this practice, but essentially it was intended to honour childhood, and to instil humility and purity of heart in remembrance of One who said: 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the Wise Men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the Wise Men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

In Rama was there a voice heard,  
Lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning,  
Rachel weeping for her children,  
And would not be comforted, because they are not.

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared

in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

*St Matthew, Chapter 2, verses 13-21*



## *Holy Week*

*HOLY WEEK* is the name given to the week before Easter, the week in which Maundy Thursday (see page 93), Good Friday (see page 61), and Holy Saturday (see Eastertide, page 50) fall. For Anglicans, Holy Week includes Palm Sunday (see page 104) but for Roman Catholics the week begins on the Monday. It is the second week of Passiontide (see Passion Sunday, page 106), a time of preparation for Easter and for remembering with deep humility and devotion the Passion of Christ.

People who do not know very much about the festivals of the Christian Church are apt to confuse Holy Week with Easter Week. It is a good thing to get the distinction clear in our minds, at the same time realising that the observances of Holy Week can mean very little unless they result in a deeper love for Jesus Christ and a strengthened resolution so to act as becomes one of His disciples.

*Immaculate Conception*  
*of*  
*The Blessed Virgin Mary*

DECEMBER 8

*THE* name of this festival has given rise to misunderstandings, and probably many people only know of it through these. It is a festival of Eastern origin, and it was a long time before it spread to Western Europe. It was even longer before it was accepted by the Roman Church, and it still has no place in the Anglican calendar.

The title 'Immaculate Conception' is not intended to convey that the Virgin Mary was immaculately conceived, but that she was conceived immaculate – in other words, free from sin. Controversies raged around this doctrine in the Middle Ages, with many of the great theologians opposing it and others defending it. Eventually the Roman Church accepted it and in the fifteenth century the festival, already observed in the East and in many parts of the West, was officially recognised. The dogma was defined in 1854 by Pope Pius IX, very much on the lines set forth by the seventeenth-century French cleric Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux and one of the most famous preachers of all time, when he proclaimed Christ to be innocent by nature, and Mary to be innocent by grace. Many devout Christians may find the distinction difficult to grasp; they may see the innocence of Christ more clearly in the gospel according to St Luke: 'And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him.' And the innocence of Mary, too, they may find in the same gospel, in her obedience to Divine Will and simple trust in God: 'Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word.'



## *Invention of the Cross*

MAY 3

*THE* word 'invention' used in the name of this festival has its ancient meaning of 'finding' or 'discovering,' and the feast commemorates the finding of what was believed to be the true Cross by St Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine. The tradition connecting her with the discovery, and of the discovery itself, grew up many years after her death, and there is no contemporary source, but Helena herself was not only an historical person but a woman of true saintly character. Nevertheless, even the undoubted truth has become confused, at least to English people, for a legend grew up in the Middle Ages to the effect that Helena was an English princess, the daughter of King Coel (Old King Cole) of Colchester, and this legend became so firmly established that to this day many people claim St Helena for an Englishwoman.

St Helena was born in Bithynia, at Drepanum, on the Gulf of Nicomedia, and she is believed to have been the daughter of an innkeeper. She was married to the Emperor Constantius Chlorus, who abandoned her some twenty years later in favour of a more influential bride. Her son, Constantine, who was proclaimed Emperor at York in 306, lost no time in establishing her position; he was devoted to his mother and honoured her for the rest of her days. Constantine was the first Christian Emperor and it is said to have been through his influence that Helena was converted to Christianity. She became a zealous and devout Christian, kind and generous to the poor and com-

passionate to the suffering and helpless. In her old age, when she was about eighty, she went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and it was during this visit that she is said to have discovered the three crosses which had stood on Calvary. According to the legend, there was at first some doubt as to which of the three was the cross on which Jesus suffered, but when a sick woman was touched by fragments taken from each cross in turn, the third produced such a miraculous and lasting cure that there could be no doubt as to its identity.

For some Christians the feast of the Invention of the Cross commemorates a historical incident, and for others a well-loved legend. Others, again, find inspiration in the thought that the Christian pilgrimage does not cease with old age, and that the way of discovery is never closed. An elderly English scholar, Doctor Rendel Harris of Birmingham, used to pray: 'Give us this day our daily discovery.' That might well be a prayer for the feast of the Invention of the Cross.



*Lady Day*  
*or*  
*Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

MARCH 25

*THE* date of Lady Day is familiar to many who may give little thought to its religious significance, for it is the first of the English Quarter Days. It was at one time an even more important date, for throughout Europe during the Middle Ages the year began on Lady Day, the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. When the calendar was reformed by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, the first of January was restored to its former position as the first day of the new year. This was not so in England, however. Though steps were taken in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I to bring the calendar into line with that introduced by Pope Gregory XIII, the Church would have none of it, and popular prejudice was against the change. Thus for another century and a half, until the alteration of the calendar in 1752 during the reign of George II, England's year began on Lady Day.

Lady Day commemorates the Annunciation by the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, and the conception of Christ. Thus its date was fixed in relation to the date of the Nativity. The importance attached to Lady Day is clearly shown by its former position at the beginning of the year in Christendom, and it is still one of the more familiar festivals of the Christian Church. For many it is inextricably associated with early Italian paintings of the slender Madonna and her angelic visitor; for others with English folk carols and mediaeval poetry –

Mother and maiden  
Was never none but she,  
Well may such a lady  
Goddess mother be.

Possibly few remember the revolutionary note which rings through the Magnificat, and yet that too must have been amongst the things which Mary kept 'and pondered them in her heart.'

And in the sixth month the Angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias,



and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And Mary said,

My soul doth magnify the Lord  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:  
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;  
And holy is his name.  
And his mercy is on them that fear him  
From generation to generation.  
He hath shewed strength with his arm;  
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seats,  
And exalted them of low degree.  
He hath filled the hungry with good things;  
And the rich he hath sent empty away.  
He hath holpen his servant Israel,  
In remembrance of his mercy;  
As he spake to our fathers,  
To Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

*Lammastide*

AUGUST 1

*THE* name Lammas is a familiar one for many reasons: it is included as a festival in the Book of Common Prayer; it is the third Quarter Day in Scotland; and it occurs with some frequency in literature. The Ballad of the Battle of Otterburn begins:

It fell about the Lammastide  
When husbands win their hay,  
The doughty Douglas bound him to ride  
In England to take a prey.

Also the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* refreshes her memory in calculating the date of Juliet's birth by referring to Lammas-tide:

NURSE:                         How long is it now  
                                    To Lammastide?

LADY CAPULET: A fortnight and odd days.

NURSE: Even or odd, of all days in the year,  
Come Lammas Eve at night shall she be  
fourteen.

In spite of this familiarity, however, few people seem to know what the significance of Lammas may be, and to add to the confusion it acquired in some districts a new meaning during the later Middle Ages – in Wales, for instance, where



the Welsh name means 'lamb-tithing' and in the neighbourhood of York, where a tribute of lambs was required on that day from tenants of the Minster lands. This tribute was required because of the dedication of the Minster to St Peter, held to be the patron saint of lambs because of Christ's injunction: 'Feed my lambs.' In the Roman Catholic Church, the day is especially associated with St Peter; it is known as the feast of St Peter ad Vincula – St Peter's chains. The chains with which St Peter was bound are said to have been preserved in Jerusalem and eventually given to Eudocia, wife of Theodosius II, when she was visiting that city; she gave one of them to her daughter, Eudoxia, who built a church in Rome on the Esquiline in which to enshrine it. Eudocia also petitioned Theodosius to grant a decree whereby August the first, formerly a day kept in honour of Augustus Caesar, might be observed as a feast in honour of St Peter's chains, and this feast is still an important feature of the Roman Catholic Church.

The word Lammas actually derives from the Anglo-Saxon *Hlaf-maesse* – the Loaf Mass. In the Middle Ages, it was customary in the English Church to consecrate loaves made out of the first ripe corn at Lammastide in token of thanksgiving. Together with the bread, a sheaf of corn would be carried into the church and blessed; the first fruits of the year would be offered up to God and His blessing sought for the harvest. This ancient and very simple festival has been combined in modern times with the traditional Harvest Home into the much more elaborate Harvest Festival, but when R. S. Hawker, Vicar of Morwenstow, in Cornwall, instituted his modern harvest thanksgiving in 1843, he preserved something of the simplicity of Lammastide and handed on its message into a new age: 'Let us gather together in the chancel of our church on the first Sunday of the next month (October),' he wrote, 'and there receive, in the bread of the new corn, that blessed sacrament

which was ordered to strengthen and refresh our souls. Furthermore, let us remember, that, as a multitude of grains of wheat are mingled into one loaf, so we, being many, are intended to be joined together into one, in that holy sacrament of the Church of Jesus Christ.'



## *Lent*

*THE* season of Lent consists of a fast of forty days in preparation for Easter. The name derives from the Anglo-Saxon *lencten*, meaning Spring. However, it is not a time of rejoicing for the season of the year and for the new life of the flowers and trees, but rather a period of discipline and training for the new life of the spirit. At one time, Lent implied rigorous fasting, but gradually this was relaxed till eventually, by the eighteenth century, the pendulum had swung far in the other direction and in Britain the observance of Lent was generally neglected. In the following century, however, it was revived and the fast is now observed at least to some extent amongst church-going people.

At first sight Lent seems to those who do not practise it a repressive and puritanical idea: a deprivation of the good things of life for deprivation's sake. It is much more than this, however. The fasting is intended to be accompanied by almsgiving, and to be the expression of a repentance which shows itself in mercy towards others. Like so many of the festivals of the Church, Lent stands for something which Christians should always be doing, yet of which they sometimes need reminding. The Lord's Prayer can be a daily reminder of the Lenten spirit: Give us this day our daily bread – and so long as my brother is in want, I cannot eat my bread with peace of mind; Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us – I cannot close my heart to my brother and open it to God. Many

people nowadays realise that Christians have a special witness to make in a world which is divided between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and so we find young people demonstrating in public what it means to live in refugee conditions, and relief societies organising dinners at which the guests consume only soup, or bread and cheese, and the money saved goes to feed the hungry. This all typifies the Lenten spirit, expressed at other times and in other ways, and it is important that we should recognise it when we see it, for though to some the importance of the prescribed feast may outweigh all other considerations, to others it may well seem that just as Lent is the preparation for Easter, so the acceptance of discipline, and self-sacrifice, and compassion is a preparation for the Kingdom which Christ died and rose again to bring.



## *Martinmas*

NOVEMBER II

*MARTINMAS* was at one time a very important rural festival, and children in country schools in certain areas still enjoy a day's holiday at Martinmas. It is believed to derive from a still more ancient festival, one of the two which marked in heathen times the beginning and end of winter. In spite of its association with the former, there are often a few days of warm weather at about the time of Martinmas, and thus it is customary to speak of 'St Martin's Summer.' Nevertheless, in folk song and tradition the season is identified with chill November weather and wintry forebodings:

It fell about the Martinmas,  
When nights are lang and mirk,  
The carline wife's three sons came hame,  
And their hats were o' the birk.

It neither grew in syke nor ditch,  
Nor yet in ony sheugh;  
But at the gates o Paradise  
That birk grew fair enough.

In the Middle Ages, Martinmas was the time for butchery. Farmers were unable to carry all their stock through the winter months; the grass was scanty and the field cultivation of root crops was not yet practised or understood. The old method of strip cultivation was followed, and after the first sheaves had been cut at Lammastide and the corn harvested, the animals

were turned out to feed on the stubble. Then winter ploughing began, and by Martinmas a drastic reduction of stock became necessary. As much of the meat as possible was preserved – salted and dried or pickled in vinegar and spices – but the wealth of offal provided ample means for general feasting. Once the feasting at Martinmas was over and the winter wore on, there would be no fresh meat to be had – hence the importance of the dovecote in those days.

St Martin, for whom the day is named, was born early in the fourth century. He was the son of heathen parents who bitterly opposed his wish to become a Christian. His father thought to solve the problem by making the boy enlist in the Roman Army, but he still cherished his Christian aspirations and tried in so far as he was able to live a Christian life. One bitter winter's day he was riding from camp towards Amiens when he saw at the city gates a wretched, shivering beggar pleading for alms. To the amusement of his companions, the young man promptly cut his military cloak in two with his sword and threw half of it over the poor man's naked shoulders. That night Martin saw a vision. He saw Jesus Christ in a radiance of glory surrounded by angelic beings, and about His shoulders fell the warm folds of half a Roman officer's cloak. 'See what Martin hath given to me,' said a voice of ineffable glory and power and sweetness, 'whilst yet a catechumen.'\*

Martin hesitated no longer. He was baptised at Amiens and some time later asked to be discharged from the Army. At first he was accused of cowardice, whereupon he demanded to be put in the front line of the battle without weapons or armour. 'I will not fight again,' he declared. 'I am become a soldier of Christ.'

Eventually he was given his discharge and thenceforth he devoted his life to the service of his Master. He sought no

\*Convert undergoing instruction.



honours, desiring nothing better than to be a humble Christian, but despite his wish he was made Bishop of Tours. So many people sought him out there that he retired to a cave at Marmoutier, and many eager pupils followed him, to live in other caves nearby and learn from him the lessons of Christian discipleship. Throughout his long life he was merciful and compassionate, and he refused to countenance either judicial or ecclesiastical intolerance. He protested in vain against the execution of the heretic Priscillian and his companions at Trèves and would not associate afterwards with the intolerant bishops who had urged the Emperor to impose the death penalty. Priscillian and his friends were the first heretics to be put to death for their beliefs and Martin's vehement protest, had it been heeded, might have spared the Church a heavy load of guilt and suffering.

Legends have gathered round St Martin's name, many of them concerning his great missionary work in converting the heathen in his diocese. Legends they may be, but many of them echo his tolerant spirit. He is said to have offered a huge fir tree to be felled because it was regarded as sacred to the gods and worshipped. When the people protested, instead of resorting to force, he asked them again to fell it, but to bind him first and lay his helpless body in the path of the falling tree. This they did, so that the old gods might crush the apostle of the new religion, but to their astonishment the tree wavered and fell in the opposite direction. As a result, many were converted.

Martinmas, stemming from an old pagan festival, and steeped in rural tradition, may now seem to many people little more than a schoolchildren's holiday, but it is a good time to remember one who was kind, wise and tolerant, and who was prepared to risk everything, even life itself, to bring people into the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## *Maundy Thursday*

*MAUNDY THURSDAY* is the Thursday preceding Easter and its curious name derives from the Latin *mandatum*, meaning 'commandment.' This was the day on which Christ gave His disciples a new commandment – 'a new commandment I give unto you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'

The institution of the Eucharist was originally commemorated on this day, until the feeling that a time other than Holy Week would afford more opportunity to give true honour to the feast resulted in the setting aside of Corpus Christi Day (see page 43) for this purpose. It is also a day marked by liturgical preparation for Good Friday (see page 61), but its special significance for most people lies in none of these, but in the ceremonial washing of the feet which, from the fourth century onwards, was a beautiful and symbolic custom carried out in both the Eastern and the Western Church. Kings and princes, popes, bishops and abbots, all alike carried out this rite in memory of the scene at the Last Supper, when Jesus girded Himself with a towel and washed the feet of His disciples, performing the task of a slave to shew them the inner meaning of His new commandment that they should love one another.

In England, the sovereign regularly performed this ceremony on Maundy Thursday, washing the feet of as many poor men



as he was years old, and afterwards giving them alms – meat, money and clothes. In some cases, due preparation was made beforehand; Queen Elizabeth I, for instance, doubtless dealt efficiently with the feet presented for her attentions, but all had previously been well scrubbed and scented with sweet herbs. The last English monarch to perform the rite was the ill-fated James II. His successor, William III, objected to it and henceforth the duty was undertaken by the Royal Almoner. Since the middle of the eighteenth century, the actual washing of the feet has been given up, but the Maundy Thursday ceremony still takes place with the presentation of ‘Maundy Money’ to chosen recipients. It is held in Westminster Abbey and the attention it attracts probably makes many people aware of the existence of Maundy Thursday who have little knowledge of the significance of the festival. But behind the impressive procession of clergy and Yeomen of the Guard still lingers the memory of the proud monarchs who on this day knelt before the poor and washed their feet as the words ‘*mandatum novum do vobis*’ were sung. And beyond that lies the challenge of Christ the King who came among us and was one who served His fellowmen: ‘I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.’

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith

he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; there said he, Ye are not all clean.

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

*St John, Chapter 13, verses 1-15*



## *Michaelmas*

SEPTEMBER 29

*MICHAELMAS* is the feast of St Michael and All Angels, founded, so it is believed, at a time when several important churches were dedicated to St Michael.

St Michael the Archangel typifies the forces of good as opposed to the forces of evil; he is represented on the one hand as the great leader of the hosts of heaven and on the other as the protector of the Christian soul against the wiles of the Devil at the hour of death. Mediaeval and Renaissance artists loved to depict him in shining armour brandishing his sword against the powers of darkness, and on the outer wall of reborn Coventry Cathedral, his heroic figure as conceived by Epstein tramples the Devil under foot. 'And there was war in heaven,' wrote St John the divine in the mysterious book of Revelation. 'Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.'

Michaelmas comes at the onset of autumn, and we use the title lightly as we feast on Michaelmas goose and cultivate our Michaelmas daisies, but the ultimate message still stands to remind us of the age-old battle between good and evil, and to ask us on which side we stand.

## *Mothering Sunday*

*MOTHERING SUNDAY* falls on the fourth Sunday in Lent and owes its name to St Paul's words used in the mass for the day – 'that Jerusalem above which is our mother.' It became customary for people and congregations to visit their Mother church on this day and leave offerings, and also for young people to return to their homes bringing presents for their mothers and 'Mothering cakes.' The traditional gift is a bunch of violets – 'he who goes a-mothering finds violets in the lane' – and the traditional cake is the simnel cake, a rich fruit cake covered with almond icing.

This old English festival is not to be confused with the American Mothers Day on the second Sunday in May, which was inspired by Miss Anna Jarvis of Philadelphia and instituted in 1913. Mothering Sunday was the one day in the year when mothers could be sure of seeing their scattered sons and daughters, and when families were reunited. Nevertheless, in more recent times the old festival almost died out, though simnel cakes continued to be enjoyed and were, in fact, so popular that the day was more generally referred to as Simnel Sunday. Whether the revival was inspired by an interest in ancient customs or by a desire to emulate 'Mothers Day' is not clear, but Mothering Sunday is now an established festival once more. Some ecclesiastical authorities feel that its early significance has been overlooked and that the ancient custom of visiting the Mother church should alone be stressed. Others



feel that children should be encouraged to honour their mothers on this day, and family services are arranged during which flowers or cards are distributed to the children, who present them to their mothers. Both observances may well be remembered as bringing the family together and at the same time reminding congregations in church, or chapel, or meeting house, that the Church itself should be like a family, with its scattered members held together in the bond of Love.

## *Name of Jesus*

*THE* feast of the Name of Jesus is celebrated in the Anglican Church on August the seventh and in the Roman Catholic Church on the Sunday between the Feast of the Circumcision (January the first) and Epiphany (January the sixth), or if in any year there is no such Sunday, on January the second.

This is by no means a familiar festival to Nonconformists or to people who belong to no religious denomination; probably many people have never even heard of it. On the other hand, some are puzzled when they hear references to the Holy Name of Jesus, or see churches dedicated to the Holy Name, and wonder what special significance can be attached to the name, apart from the Person, of Jesus Christ. Possibly it becomes a little clearer when we remember that the name means 'saviour.' This meaning is stressed in the first chapter of the Gospel according to St Matthew, where the Angel of the Lord says to Joseph in a dream: 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.' The significance deepens, moreover, when we remember how often Jesus told His disciples to act 'in my name' – 'whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me'; 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them'; 'in my name shall they cast out devils'; 'whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do'; 'I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.' To act 'in the name of Jesus' is to try to share in His work of redemption, to receive His yoke and to be His fellow-worker; to accept suffering 'in His name' is to take up the Cross and follow Him.



## *New Year's Day* *Feast of the Circumcision*

JANUARY I

*NEW YEAR'S DAY* has no special liturgical significance apart from the fact that it coincides with the Feast of the Circumcision, which naturally falls upon that day. 'And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus.' (Luke 2, verse 21.)

In the early days of the Christian Church, the keeping of a feast at this time was expressly avoided, because of the great pagan festivals which took place, many of them accompanied by general drunkenness and licentiousness. The customs connected with these old festivals survived, however, in a modified form, and eventually it seemed wise to counteract them in some measure with a Christian celebration, and thus the Feast of the Circumcision came into being.

Circumcision was, and remains, an important Jewish rite, the outward sign of initiation into the Jewish faith. It is performed on all male children on the eighth day after birth, and on older males desiring acceptance into the Jewish religious community. St Paul's bold step in affirming that this rite was not necessary for Gentile converts to Christianity caused much controversy at first, for many of the Jewish disciples felt that the acceptance of the Jewish faith was an essential preliminary which must on no account be given up. St Paul, however, insisted that what mattered was the spiritual circumcision, the change of heart and life. 'For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a

Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.' (Romans 2, verses 28-29.)

Many of the rites associated with the old heathen New Year festivals have survived into modern times, some as popular and all-too-often commercialised celebrations, and some in the form of old local customs, folk songs and children's games. New Year's Eve, or Hogmanay, is an occasion of outstanding importance in the northern half of the British Isles, the name 'Hogmanay' being used both for the festival itself and for the dole - generally a gift of oatcake - demanded by the children who come singing from door to door.

Get up, good wife, and shake your feathers,  
And dinna think that we are beggars:  
For we are bairns come out to play,  
Get up and gie 's our hogmanay.

Tremendous scenes of revelry take place on the last night of the old year in Edinburgh, Glasgow and other northern cities, and also in London, notably outside St Paul's Cathedral. *Auld Lang Syne* is sung, and much goodwill engendered, though some of the proceedings would seem calculated to make the old-style pagan feel thoroughly at home. The 'first footing' which follows is a familiar custom in Scotland, Wales and northern England. The first visitor of the New Year must be a man or boy, and it is essential for him to be dark, and preferably tall. He should also bring certain gifts; these vary according to the district, but they often include bread, coal and salt, signifying life, hospitality and warmth), sometimes wine, and sometimes a sprig of evergreen. The emphasis on the height of the visitor, and the colour of his hair and complexion, is believed by some to have its origin in race memory and racial antipathy.

Other customs connected with New Year's Eve which have



a pre-Christian origin include 'apple-howling' and 'apple-was-sailing,' though these are sometimes associated with Epiphany or with a later date in January. They are to be found in fruit-growing districts and obviously derive from ancient fertility rites. The trees are wassailed, sometimes toasted, and often beaten with sticks to the accompanying injunction: 'Pray God send us a howling good crop!'

Many of the old New Year's Eve customs have a cleansing significance, sometimes associated with fire, sometimes with water, and sometimes with the act of sweeping. There is a curious custom in parts of East Lancashire called 'mumming,' whereby small boys, and sometimes men, their faces blackened with coal dust, enter each house in turn by the front door in single file and, using hand brushes, sweep their way through to the back door, at the same time making a continuous humming noise. The use of two doors is characteristic of New Year customs; many people like to open both their doors wide at night, so that the Old Year may go out by one and the New Year come in by the other.

Though so many of these old customs have a pagan origin, they serve to remind us of the renewal of heart and spirit which is implied in St Paul's interpretation of the Circumcision and its bearing on the Christian witness. Many people feel the need for a quiet pause for worship and re-dedication at this time, and thus Watch Night Services are arranged in some of the churches. Many more make good resolutions for the coming year, but sometimes without remembering the watchfulness in prayer which will be necessary if they are to be fulfilled. Perhaps the old world and the new come very close together at this season – the old world with its half-forgotten cleansing rituals, and the new with its need to be baptised afresh. It seems fitting that in many districts a special significance should be attached to the first water drawn from the local spring or well

in the New Year. Clement Miles, in his *Christmas in Ritual and Tradition*, gives an old song from South Wales, first published in *The Athenaeum* in 1848. It was traditionally sung by country children, who would draw pitchers of fresh water from the well on the first morning of the year and, using a branch of evergreen, sprinkle passers-by with the sparkling drops. Then they would go from house to house, singing this song, which combines the message of both the old world and the new in its expression of the eternal longing of mankind for regeneration.

Here we bring new water  
From the well so clear,  
For to worship God with,  
This happy New Year.  
Sing levy-dew, sing levy-dew,  
The water and the wine;  
The seven bright gold wires  
And the bugles they do shine.

Sing reign of Fair Maid,  
With gold upon her toe, -  
Open you the West Door,  
And turn the Old Year go:  
Sing reign of Fair Maid,  
With gold upon her chin, -  
Open you the East Door,  
And let the New Year in.



## *Palm Sunday*

*PALM SUNDAY* is the Sunday before Easter and opens Holy Week (see page 78); it commemorates the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The keynote of the celebration is praise, and for many people it is inextricably associated with the singing of the hymn, '*All glory, laud and honour.*' The festival originated in Jerusalem, where as early as the fourth century a service was held on this day at the Mount of Olives. There the passage describing Christ's entry into Jerusalem was read, and then the congregation went in a joyous procession into the city, carrying branches of palm or olive. During the Middle Ages it was customary for palm leaves twisted into the shape of a cross to be blessed by the priests and distributed to the people on this day, and this ceremony is still carried out in many churches, the palm crosses being carefully preserved until the next Ash Wednesday (see page 31).

The exuberant strains of '*All glory, laud and honour*' ringing out after weeks of Lenten fasting may uplift the spirit even as a flame leaps up suddenly before the fire dies down, and this may perhaps remind us of the many who shouted 'Hosanna!' on that first Palm Sunday, yet lost their ardour when their faith was put to the test.

According to the poet, G. K. Chesterton, even the little donkey knew that this was his finest hour:

The tattered outlaw of the earth,  
Of ancient crooked will;

Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,  
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;  
One far fierce hour and sweet:  
There was a shout about my ears,  
And palms before my feet.

It is said that the donkey's back is marked with a cross because of that 'far fierce hour and sweet' when he bore Christ into Jerusalem, and he bore Christ because his master had received a message saying, 'The Lord hath need of him.' Perhaps amidst the 'glory, laud and honour' that need should be remembered. As the preacher who habitually put his emphasis on the unexpected word so truly said: 'If the Lord had need of *that* ass, surely he has need of you and me.'

And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strewed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

*St Mark, Chapter 11, verses 1-10*



## *Passion Sunday*

*PASSION SUNDAY* is the fifth Sunday in Lent and introduces Passiontide. In the Roman Catholic Church all crucifixes, statues and pictures are veiled on this day and remain so until Holy Saturday (see Eastertide, page 50), with the one exception of the altar crucifix, which is unveiled on Good Friday (see page 61). Many Christians regard this as a time for remembering with deep devotion the Passion of Our Lord; others feel that this thought should never be far from them, but that Christ's love, and Christ's suffering, and Christ's Kingdom should become so much a part of their lives that they may at last say with St Paul, in great humility and thankfulness: 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.'

## *Patronal Feasts*

*I*N the early days of Christianity, churches were often built over the tombs of saints and martyrs, and it became customary for such a church to be especially associated with the saint whose earthly remains lay within its walls. Thus the custom grew up of having 'patron saints' who, it was believed, would watch over each little community of worshipping Christians and be their special advocate in heaven. Naturally the feast day appointed for that particular saint would have a special meaning for the church bearing his or her name, and thus the patronal feast became, and continues to be, of considerable importance to those concerned. In some parts of England, especially in Cornwall and West Devon, the Village Feast or Revel was a popular institution in pre-Christian days, and the Church was quick to seize the opportunity of transforming, wherever possible, the heathen Revel into the Patronal Feast.



## *Plough Sunday* *and* *Plough Monday*

*AFTER* Epiphany (see page 57) comes the opening of the ploughing season, which has been marked by special observances since pagan days. Plough Sunday is the first Sunday after Epiphany, and in some rural areas it is customary for a plough to be brought to the church door by farm workers and welcomed by the Vicar and the choir. The plough is then carried in procession into the church and set down in or near the chancel. During the service both plough and farm workers are given a special blessing.

Plough Monday, the Monday following Epiphany, has customs associated with it which are fast dying out, but which date back to the pre-Christian era. Ploughmen and ploughboys would rise very early in the morning and sally forth in disguise, dragging a decorated plough from house to house and shouting: 'A penny for the ploughboy! A penny for the ploughboy!' If no pennies materialised, they would plough up the miserly householder's path, or dislodge his doorstep with the ploughshare. Traditional songs are associated with the day, and also plays and ritual dances, mainly on the theme of violent death and miraculous revival.

Thus the theme of the plough is interwoven with the story of our race, and the Young Farmers' Clubs which maintain the custom of bringing the plough into the church to receive a blessing, are keeping up a tradition based on our deepest impulses.

PURIFICATION (*see Candlemas*)

*Quadragesima Sunday*  
*and*  
*Quinquagesima Sunday*

*QUADRAGESIMA* means the forty days of Lent (see page 88), and Quadragesima Sunday is the first Sunday in Lent. Quinquagesima Sunday is the Sunday before Lent, also known as Shrove Sunday.



## *Remembrance Day*

*REMEMBRANCE DAY* is a modern festival of remembrance which has developed from the Armistice Day commemoration ceremony held after the First World War. This took the form of a two-minute silence observed all over the country on the morning of November 11th, at the time when the Armistice was signed. In Whitehall, London, and in every city, town and village, services were held in which the silent minutes were incorporated, but perhaps even more impressive was the hush which fell when the traffic suddenly stopped, the pedestrians stood still, and in every mine, factory, farm and workshop all activity ceased in so far as was possible.

This festival has now been fixed for the Sunday nearest to November 11th, and at this time the dead of two World Wars are remembered, combatants and civilians alike, the ideals which inspired them and the hopes which sustained them. The older generation remembers, and the younger generations wonder; perhaps this festival too should be observed not once a year but every day, with prayers for forgiveness, for charity, and for the faith and the courage to build the world anew.

## *Rogation Days*

*THE* name 'Rogation' comes from the Latin 'rogare,' to ask, and also, according to some authorities, from 'rogatio,' the Latin equivalent for 'litany,' which derives from the Greek. The first derivation is obvious, for Rogationtide is a time of intercession for the crops; the second is suggested by the practice in Roman Catholic churches of chanting the Litany of the Saints during the procession which is part of the observance proper to this festival.

The 'Major Rogation' is on April 25th, and originally superseded a pagan festival known as the 'Robiglia', when processions would be led around the cornfields to intercede with the gods for the preservation of the crops from mildew. The 'Minor Rogations' are the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before Ascension Day (see page 29); they were intended to be days of abstinence when public litanies might be said and the blessing of God invoked upon the crops. Rogation Sunday is the fifth Sunday after Easter and immediately precedes the three Minor Rogations. At one time Rogationtide was the season for the annual ceremony of 'beating the bounds of the parish,' and this is still kept up in a number of places. In days when maps were rare, and little understood, the annual procession round the bounds of the parish served as a means of establishing the legal boundaries and handing on the knowledge to the younger generation, and to further the latter aim, it was often the custom to beat with



willow rods not only the bounds, but the small boys of the parish, or to bump the urchins on the ground when the limits were reached. At certain points of parish boundaries, venerable oaks known as 'holy oaks' or 'gospel oaks' are still occasionally to be found; these marked the points where the procession would stop for the gospel to be read on Rogation Days.

In recent years there has been a renewal of interest in Rogationtide, and in some country districts processions through the fields have been revived. Clergy and choir move about the parish, pausing in cornfield, meadow, farmyard or orchard, to ask God's blessing on men and beasts and crops. In many country churches special services are held in which local farmers and agricultural workers take part, and often these can be shared by listeners over the radio. And though all these observances may well be said to have evolved from old pagan customs and invocations to heathen gods, yet in their Christian interpretation they bring the life of the farm into the life of the Church, which is where it should be, for 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.'

## *Rushbearing Days*

*THERE* is no fixed date for 'rushbearings,' though it is believed that these were generally associated with the patronal festivals of the churches where the custom was observed, or sometimes with Midsummer Day, the feast of St. John the Baptist. Perhaps the most famous 'rushbearing' to survive is that of Grasmere, in Westmorland, which takes place on the Saturday following August 5th, the Feast of Oswald, the patron saint of the church.

Rushbearings were originally essentially practical occasions, for they were the days appointed for the renewing of the rushes strewn on the church floor. Rushes, straw or hay were in general the only floor covering, pleasant enough when fresh, but dank and foul-smelling when old and due for renewal. The villagers brought an annual tribute of rushes for the purpose, and these were carried in procession with flowers and garlands to the church.

Grasmere Church has been paved long since, but the procession still takes place every year, led by the clergy and choir. Six 'rushmaidens' carry a linen sheet lined with rushes, and all the children of the village follow with baskets of flowers. They go in procession round the village and come at last into the church, where a special service is held and the hymn of the rushbearers sung.

Our fathers to the house of God,  
As yet a building rude,



Brought offerings from the flowery sod,  
And fragrant rushes strew'd.  
May we their children ne'er forget  
The pious lesson given,  
But honour still, together met,  
The Lord of earth and heaven.

## *Saints' Days*

*ACTUALLY*, every day in the year is a Feast Day, for every day is an occasion for remembering what Dr Rufus Jones loved to call 'the luminous trail of saints whom Christ has made.' Volumes of Lives of the Saints, whether Catholic or Protestant, are starred with the names of these shining ones; some familiar and well-loved, others almost unknown; some famous in history, some humble and obscure, and others regarded by many as mythical, or as mere names which by chance have echoed down the centuries.

In the Roman Catholic Church, canonisation is a slow and careful process, preceded by beatification, when the faithful departed soul receives the title of 'Blessed.' After the solemn pronouncement of canonisation made by the Pope, the saint is recognised as having entered into heavenly glory, his aid may be invoked in prayer, and a special day is set aside in which he may be remembered with honour and with thankfulness to God. The Eastern and the Protestant Churches also have their Saints' Days, and though many of the Nonconformists do not recognise these and find no place in their worship for the invocation of the saints, they too praise God for all who, like St Paul, have 'fought a good fight, and finished the course, and kept the faith.'

Perhaps St Paul gave the best definition of a saint when he wrote to the Galatians: 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' The late Violet



Hodgkin once said that saints were people who 'let the sunlight through,' and that, with St Paul's definition, may give us the key to Dr Rufus Jones's 'luminous trail' – the men and women who, all down the ages, have let the light of Christ shine through their lives.

It would be impossible, within the compass of this book, to include all the saints with their festival days, not even the more familiar ones. Somewhere a choice has to be made, but even then it is difficult to be consistent. The Saints' Days which have been included in the following pages are for the most part those with which everybody is familiar, often for reasons quite unconnected with the importance of the saintly life commemorated – for instance, St Swithin, with his supposed influence upon our summer weather, and St Valentine, whose day calls forth such a profusion of sentimental stationery in the shops. When these have been enumerated, with the inevitable omission of a few who figure in more local folk-lore, there are some who cannot be left out. For example, if St Luke's Summer gives us one of the evangelists, we cannot exclude the other three. Nevertheless, there comes a point where the list must be closed and the reader directed to one of the many books about the saints which can do more justice to their shining story.

God's saints are shining lights: who stays  
Here long must pass  
O'er dark hills, swift streams, and steep ways  
As smooth as glass;  
But these all night,  
Like candles, shed  
Their beams, and light  
Us into bed.

They are indeed our pillar-fires  
Seen as we go;  
They are that City's shining spires  
We travel to.

Henry Vaughan, 1622-1695



## *Saint Agnes*

JANUARY 21

*THE* name of St Agnes is familiar to many people from their schooldays because of Keats' poem: *The Eve of St Agnes*.

St Agnes' Eve – Ah, bitter chill it was!  
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;  
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,  
And silent was the flock in woolly fold.

The Eve of St Agnes is associated with all manner of charms by which young girls may discover the names of their future husbands. St Agnes is the patron saint of young girls, because she herself is said to have been only thirteen when she was martyred. There is considerable doubt in some quarters as to whether in fact she ever existed, possibly on account of the many legends which have grown up around her name. Even her name has led to confusion, because it has mistakenly been given the meaning of 'lamb,' on account of its similarity to the Latin 'agnus,' a lamb. St Agnes is almost invariably represented with a lamb, and the 'pallium' worn by the Pope, and granted by him to Archbishops, is woven from the wool of lambs which have been blessed on St Agnes' Day in the Church of Sant' Agnese fuori le mure.

The story of St Agnes is so typical of the courageous stand made by mere children in the early days of Christianity that it seems unnecessary to reject it as apocryphal. She is said to have been a Roman girl, the daughter of wealthy parents, and much

sought after on account of her beauty and grace. The son of an important prefect of the city wished to marry her, and was so furious when she rejected his advances that he denounced her to his father, who at first tried to persuade her to recant.

'Remember you are but a child,' said the prefect.

'I may be a child, but faith dwells not in years but in the heart,' the girl replied.

Eventually Agnes was condemned to be burnt to death, but as she prayed at the stake the flames died down at her feet, whereupon the executioner struck off her head with his sword.

Many young girls such as St Agnes died for their faith by fire and sword, and whatever may be the exact truth of her story, the ultimate truth rests in her innocence and purity and courage. These have lived on down the ages, so that her name is still remembered by many who revere her as a saint, by others who regard her tenderly as a legendary figure, and not least by country girls who still follow the old tradition and seek to know their fate on the Eve of St Agnes.



## *Saint Andrew*

NOVEMBER 30

*ST ANDREW* is the patron saint of Scotland, so that his name is familiar to most people in the British Isles. Curiously enough, he is not invariably identified in the popular imagination with Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, probably because on the face of it there seems to be no particular reason why this disciple of our Lord's should be especially connected with Scotland. There is, however, more reason than would appear at first sight, for it is believed that the relics of St Andrew were brought, after many wanderings, to a place called Kilrymont, on the coast of Fife, where a little stone church was built to enshrine them. This church was dedicated to the saint, and eventually it gave the place a new name which was to become famous in Scottish history – St Andrews.

In the Gospel story, Andrew tends to be overshadowed by his forceful brother, Simon Peter, but further study reveals some very definite and appealing characteristics. Andrew is one of the first apostles to be called by Christ, and afterwards, when we hear of him, he always seems to be bringing people to Jesus. 'He first findeth his own brother, Simon,' says the Gospel according to St John, 'and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.' He brings the lad with the barley loaves and fishes when five thousand people who have been listening eagerly to Jesus are hungry and the disciples have nothing to give them. 'There is a lad here, which hath five

barley loaves and two small fishes,' says Andrew, bringing the boy forward. 'But what are they among so many?' They may be nothing; they may be everything; only Jesus knows, and Andrew is content to leave it at that. When 'certain Greeks' who have come to worship in Jerusalem ask Philip if they can see Jesus, Philip's first impulse is to seek out Andrew, and somehow or other Andrew arranges it. Obviously he was an approachable, friendly man. Probably people would hesitate to approach Peter, the impetuous, forceful leader, or John, the 'disciple whom Jesus loved'; these men were obviously set apart, men very close to the Saviour, whose influence was, and would always be, supremely important. In comparison with them, Andrew was not important; he was just somebody you could love and trust.

Because of his approachability, and because of his special gift for bringing people to Jesus, St Andrew has always been especially associated with missionary work, but these qualities need not be confined to foreign missions, for they are needed at home quite as much as in other countries.



## *Saint Anthony*

JANUARY 17

'*ST ANTHONY'S FIRE*' is a popular name for erysipelas, an infection of which one of the symptoms is an acute inflammation of the skin in the affected parts. One of the best-loved figures in English literature, Charles Lamb, died of erysipelas which spread from an infected graze on the face, caused by a fall.

The St Anthony whose name has become attached to this unpleasant infection, and whose aid was invoked against the disease, was the great St Anthony of Egypt, the father of monasticism. Born in 251, he was the son of Christian parents, well-to-do people from whom he inherited considerable wealth. The great turning point of his life came when he was quite a young man. As he worshipped in church one day, he heard the advice given by Jesus to the rich young ruler: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.' These words struck Anthony to the heart, for they came to him with a personal challenge which could not be evaded. His response was immediate and dramatic. He went out, sold all his possessions, and henceforth devoted himself to a life of prayer and contemplation and self-denial.

St Anthony became a hermit, living on a sparse diet of bread and water, and lying on the bare ground. In spite of his austere and dedicated life, and the long hours he spent in prayer, he was subject to terrible and fantastic temptations. He is said to

have suffered incredible torments from malicious demons, and to have fought in the physical as well as in the spiritual sense with the Devil himself. For many years he lived a solitary life in the desert, but eventually the charm of his character, and the purity and integrity of his way of life attracted many disciples. These gathered around him in huts and cells, where they lived as hermits, while drawing strength from his example, and encouragement from one another. The number of these solitaries grew steadily until at last St Anthony organised them into a kind of community, whose members obeyed a common rule yet shared no common life. Out of this simple beginning, together with other, similar experiments, the monastic system was to develop, with its varied richness, complex organisation, and incalculable influence on the course of history:

Periodically St Anthony left his retirement in answer to some pressing need amongst his fellow-men – persecution, or sickness, or religious controversy. He had a wonderful gift for healing, and his aid was invoked in epidemics, not only during his lifetime, but for long after his death. His intercession was believed to have been especially efficacious during a terrible epidemic of a virulent disease, of a type similar to erysipelas, which was rampant in Europe during the eleventh century. This was brought about, so it is now thought, by the widespread consumption of ergotised grain, and it is believed to have ceased miraculously wherever and whenever St Anthony's aid was invoked.

St Anthony died in 356, at the age of a hundred and five, leaving behind him the remembrance of a singularly lovable character, a man who could create an oasis of peace and purity and holiness in a troubled and restless age.



## *Saint Catherine*

NOVEMBER 25

*VERY* little is known about St Catherine, yet she was one of the most popular saints in the Middle Ages, and her name lives on in folk-lore. Moreover, her emblem, the wheel which was her instrument of torture, is commemorated in the Catherine Wheel, which is the pride and glory of many a backyard firework display, except when it ingloriously fails to revolve upon its pin.

St Catherine is believed to have been martyred in Alexandria early in the fourth century. She is said to have been young, learned and beautiful, a member of a wealthy and noble family. Some say that the Emperor admired her and that she repelled his advances; others that she pleaded with him for the Christians, who were being relentlessly persecuted. In a storm of tyrannical rage, he condemned her to be broken on the wheel, but when she was placed upon it, the wheel broke into many pieces and her bonds flew apart. Afterwards she was beheaded, and her body is said to have been carried away by angels and buried on Mount Sinai. She is regarded as the patron saint of wheelwrights, scholars and spinsters.

St Catherine's name, like those of St Luke, St Martin and St Swithin, occurs in folk-lore concerning the weather. Cold weather on St Catherine's day presages a hard winter, and warm weather a soft one, and those who uphold this rural superstition insist that statistics have proved them to be right.

## *Saint Cecilia*

NOVEMBER 22

*ST CECILIA*'s name is familiar to musicians and to people interested in music for various reasons: because she is regarded as the patron saint of music, especially of church music and the organ; because she is depicted in a number of masterpieces, either singing or holding a musical instrument; and because of the imperishable music written by Henry Purcell in honour of St Cecilia's Day. The St Cecilia's Day concerts were started in 1683 by a body known as 'The Musical Society.' They commissioned famous poets to write odes, and famous composers to set the odes to music, and these were performed in public on the day of the festival. Purcell's most famous composition for St Cecilia's Day was '*Hail bright Cecilia*'; he himself took part in the performance, singing a counter-tenor solo with, it is said, 'incredible graces.'

St Cecilia's story has long been well-known in England, for it was included by Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales*, where it is recorded in the '*Seconde Nonne's Tale*.' Cecilia is believed to have been a gracious Roman lady who converted her young husband, Valerian, and his brother Tibertius, both of whom died as martyrs before she herself suffered martyrdom in about the year 230. It is said that her house was consecrated as a church, and that the Church of St Cecilia in Trastavere, to which her relics were removed in the ninth century, from the catacombs where they were originally interred, does actually cover the site of an old Roman dwelling.



St Cecilia was condemned to death by suffocation in a heated bath, and when she miraculously survived this horror, by decapitation. But nothing can still her voice, for it yet responds to the glory of God in music and in poetry.

Orpheus could lead the savage race;  
And trees uprooted left their place,  
Sequacious of the lyre;  
But bright Cecilia raised the wonder higher:  
When to her organ vocal breath was given,  
An angel heard, and straight appear'd  
Mistaking Earth for Heaven.

Dryden: Song for St Cecilia's Day, 1687

## *Saint Crispin and Saint Crispinian*

OCTOBER 25

*SHAKESPEARE* fixed the name of St Crispin for ever in the hearts of English-speaking people with Henry V's speech before Agincourt.

This day is call'd the feast of Crispian:  
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,  
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is nam'd,  
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.  
He that shall live this day, and see old age,  
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,  
And say, 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian':  
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,  
And say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's day."  
Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,  
But he'll remember with advantages  
What feats he did that day. Then shall our names  
Familiar in his mouth as household words,  
Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,  
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,  
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.  
This story shall the good man teach his son;  
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered;  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;



For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile  
This day shall gentle his condition:  
And gentlemen in England now a-bed  
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

Young people may perhaps be forgiven for harbouring a vague idea that Crispin must have been an Englishman, or for thinking 'Crispian' to be a variant of 'Crispin.' There are, however, two saints concerned, the brothers Crispin and Crispinian. They were aristocratic young Romans who fled from the persecution under Diocletian and settled in Soissons, where they earned their living as shoemakers, supporting themselves by their own labours as they preached the Gospel. After a while, however, persecution broke out locally and they were denounced to the authorities, who ordered them to be beheaded. Both are commemorated on October 25th in the Roman Catholic Calendar, but in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer St Crispin stands alone, though in the proposals for the Revised Version in 1928 it was intended for Crispinian to join his brother once more. Very naturally, the brothers are regarded as the patron saints of shoemakers. Many legends are associated with them, and some believe their whole story to be legendary, but their names will be remembered as long as Shakespeare's plays are acted and read. And however unlikely some of the legends may seem to modern ears, they do at least agree in conveying an impression of brotherliness, and cheerful industry, and above all, of deathless courage.

## *Saint David*

MARCH I

*ST DAVID* is the patron saint of Wales and was, so it is believed, himself a Welshman, well-educated, and born of a royal line. Very little is known about his life, except that he was a man of great energy and charm, with a voice which could be heard by thousands as they crowded to hear him on the wind-swept hillsides of his native land. He was made a bishop, and later, so it is said, Archbishop of Wales, and he founded many monasteries, including one at his episcopal seat of Mynyw, or Menevia (now St David's), where the rule was similar to that of Egypt, very strict and austere. The monks were inured to a life of hard work and self-mortification; they wrested their living from the soil, taming the grudging acres with their own hands, and it was no unusual thing for them to be harnessed to the plough, like oxen. St David himself lived under an iron, self-imposed discipline, with bread and water for his main diet, and a routine of hard manual labour, meditation and prayer. Living in the sixth century, when the natives of Britain were being overwhelmed, or pushed back into the hills by invaders, he preached the Gospel fearlessly and upheld the light of Christianity in his mountainous stronghold at a time when conditions were chaotic elsewhere. He lived to a great age, and was not only revered as a great and saintly leader, but tenderly loved as the pastor of his flock. When he died, so it is said, 'kings mourned him as a judge, the older people mourned him as a brother, the younger as a father.' Few people of such austerity, combined with so great an organising capacity, can have earned such a loving epitaph.



## *Saint Elmo*

APRIL 14

*ST ELMO'S FIRE* is another and more familiar name for the corposant, the electrical discharge or ball of light seen on the masts and yard-arms of ships during a storm at sea. In ancient times this was held to be a sign of the protection of the twin gods, Castor and Pollux.

St Elmo, or St Peter González, as he is more correctly but less familiarly named, was a great Dominican preacher who in the early part of the thirteenth century felt called to work amongst the seafaring people along the coasts of Spain. He was greatly loved by these rough, hard-working folk, and it is not surprising that his name should have been given to the corposant, which came to be regarded as a sign of his care and protection in times of danger.

## *Saint George*

APRIL 23

*EVERYBODY* knows that St George is the patron saint of England and that he slew a dragon, and everybody sees his red cross on a white ground flying from the church towers on St George's Day, but few seem to know much more about him than that. Many believe him to be as mythical as Perseus, who also slew a dragon, and it is indeed possible that this part of his story derives from the exploits of the fabulous Greek hero. On the other hand, it is equally possible that the dragon existed and was slain by St George, but that it was actually an enormous but perfectly credible crocodile, such as could be found in those days at Beirut, where the incident is said to have occurred.

St George lived towards the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth centuries. He was born at Lydda, in Palestine, of a wealthy family, and grew up to become a soldier, and a tribune in the imperial guard. Handsome, courteous and courageous, he seemed to be a young man with a great future before him. He had indeed a great future before him, but it was to be the early winning of a martyr's crown.

When Diocletian began his fierce persecution of the Christians, St George left the army and, returning to Lydda, freed his slaves and sold his possessions. Then, bound on a new life of adventure, he set off for Nicomedia to see the Emperor, and it was on his way there that he is believed to have encountered and slain the dragon. Not long after his arrival in



Nicomedia, he was thrown into prison, tortured and beheaded: some say because he had torn down the imperial edicts against the Christians which had been posted on the church door at Nicomedia; some because he had dared to oppose the Emperor to his face; and others because he had refused to abjure his Christian faith and make even so much as a token sacrifice. His sorrowing servants asked for his body and carried it faithfully back to Lydda, where it was buried.

St George was made patron saint of England in the fourteenth century, in place of St Edward the Confessor. It may seem strange that the gentle English saint, the founder of Westminster Abbey, should be thus superseded, but St George had become very popular with the crusaders, and his youth and vigour and courage appealed to a young and growing nation.

## *Saint James*

JULY 25

IN parts of London, and in some of the southern counties, notably Surrey, it is still customary for children to construct little grottoes on or about St James's Day, and to collect 'pennies for the grotto.' At one time, these grottoes were mainly constructed from oyster shells, which could easily be obtained, even by the poorest child, until comparatively recent days. 'It's a very remarkable circumstance, sir,' says Sam Weller to Mr Pickwick in Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, 'that poverty and oysters always seems to go together.—Look here, sir; here's an oyster stall to every half-dozen houses. The street's lined with 'em. Blessed if I don't think that ven a man's very poor, he rushes out of his lodgings, and eats oysters in reg'lar desperation.' Now that oysters have ceased to be an inexpensive food, however, the children have to be content to decorate their grottoes with bright shards of china and coloured stones.

The St James commemorated in this old custom is St James the Apostle, known as 'the Great,' not St James 'the Lord's brother,' nor St James 'the Less,' the son of Alphaeus. St James 'the Great' was the brother of St John, and one of the close friends of Jesus. James and John were Galilean fishermen, the sons of Zebedee, and partners in a very considerable fishing enterprise with Simon (later to be known as Peter) and Andrew. All four were called to be apostles on the same eventful day, which is dramatically described by St Mark in his Gospel. 'Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the



kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.'

The brothers James and John were affectionately nicknamed 'Boanerges' by Jesus – 'sons of thunder.' Together with Simon Peter, they formed an inner circle of the apostles, the chosen friends and special companions of their Master. When He came to the house where Jairus's little daughter lay, 'he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, James and John, and the father and mother of the maiden.' Only they heard Him say softly, 'Damsel, arise!' and only they saw the child open her eyes as 'her spirit came again.' At the Transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane, again he chose Peter, James and John to go with him. They alone saw His glory, and they alone shared in some measure His agony.

James was the first of the chosen three to die, for in the Acts of the Apostles it is recorded that Herod Agrippa 'stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.' It was long thought that after Pentecost St James went on a missionary journey to Spain, afterwards returning to Jerusalem and to martyrdom, but there appears to be no historical foundation for this story. Only because of this, St James has always been especially associated with Spain, and Compostella, where his relics were

believed to be enshrined, early became a place of pilgrimage. He became the patron saint of Spain and also, because of the countless pilgrims who flocked to Compostella, the patron saint of pilgrims. In the Middle Ages it was customary for a pilgrim to wear a scallop shell badge in his hat, or pinned to his cape, to show that the pilgrimage to Compostella had been made, and the scallop shell is still peculiarly a pilgrim's emblem. In a later age, Sir Walter Raleigh was to use it in an even deeper symbolical sense:

Give me my scallop-shell of quiet,  
My staff of faith to walk upon,  
My scrip of joy, immortal diet,  
My bottle of salvation,  
My gown of glory, hope's true gage;  
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.

The shell as a pilgrims' emblem is still to be seen on coats-of-arms, and stained-glass windows, and monuments in churches and cathedrals; and in places where the old custom survives there is still to be found an unconscious reminder in the gleaming shards and coloured stones which decorate the children's grottoes on St James's Day.



## *Saint John*

DECEMBER 27

*ST JOHN* and St James, the sons of Zebedee, were amongst the followers of John the Baptist, and it was in his company that they first saw Jesus. 'Behold, the Lamb of God!' he said, as Jesus passed by, and the two young men knew that they were in the presence of the Messiah whose coming John the Baptist had foretold, whose shoe latchet even he, the greatest prophet of his day, was not worthy to unloose. 'Rabbi,' they asked of Jesus, 'where dwellest thou?' And He answered: 'Come and see.'

Afterwards came the first call, when they were working at their trade with their father, Zebedee, and the hired servants. Nearly two thousand years have passed, yet the scene is still vivid – the shore of the Sea of Galilee on a calm, sunny day, with Zebedee's boat at anchor and the brothers busy mending the nets. 'Come ye after me,' called Jesus, 'and I will make you to become fishers of men.' The nets fell from their hands as they jumped ashore and followed Him.

James and John were impetuous, and it was a long time before they learned to accept the spiritual discipline which welded them into saints. When the Samaritans refused hospitality to Jesus and His disciples, their first impulse was to ask the Master if they should 'command fire to come down from heaven and consume them.' His reply must have gone straight to their hearts. 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy lives but to save

them.' But when, urged on by their mother, the brothers came to Him with a request that they might sit one on His right hand and the other on His left hand – thus holding the most important places – when He came unto His Kingdom, Jesus showed an even deeper discernment of their spirits. 'Ye know not what ye ask,' he said. 'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?'

The truth must have been dawning on James and John, for Jesus had already told them that He was going up to Jerusalem to face betrayal and death, yet they replied, 'We are able!'

Jesus did not turn away from their eager promise. With the sublime confidence of perfect love He said: 'Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with, but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.' And when the other disciples were incensed against what they took to be the overweening ambition of the brothers, He struck across their indignation with the eternal lesson which His followers all down the ages have been so slow to learn. 'Whosoever would be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever would be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

John shared with James and Simon Peter the close friendship with Jesus which made them part of an inner circle of the disciples, witnesses of incidents and trials which only those who loved Him best might share. He is believed to have been the disciple, never named, 'whom Jesus loved,' who was closest to Him at the Last Supper, to whom, as He hung dying on the cross, He entrusted His mother, and who was one of the first to reach the sepulchre when the incredible tidings came of the



Resurrection. He it was who recognised his Risen Lord on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and to whom Jesus spoke words which gave rise to the mistaken idea that he would live to see the Second Coming – which indeed he did, but not in the sense in which it is generally understood.

St John became, with St Peter, one of the leaders in the Early Church in Jerusalem. He was at Peter's side when the lame man was healed at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, and afterwards at the trial before the Chief Priest when Peter, 'filled with the Holy Ghost' spoke out boldly, and the authorities marvelled at them, and 'took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.'

That knowledge, and that inner companionship, were to be typical of St John's life. He travelled eventually to Asia Minor and lived for many years at Ephesus, until he was exiled to Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. Eventually he returned to Ephesus, where he lived on to an extreme old age, and where he wrote the Gospel which bears his name, handing down to future generations the abiding memories of one who could say from first-hand experience, 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.' He also left the record in his epistles of 'that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Work of life.'

'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ,' wrote the aged John, and from the fellowship, and from his inner knowledge, he proclaimed with an absolute certainty which nothing could shake, the eternal gospel that 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.'

Some would say that John the son of Zebedee cannot be

identified with any certainty as the Beloved Disciple, and many have questioned the authorship of the Gospel according to St John, ascribing it to some other John of Ephesus. Yet few would fail to recognise some trace of the disciple whom Jesus loved, and some echo from the Fourth Gospel in the dearly-loved saint who, towards the close of his long life could find no words save these in which to convey the essential, never-to-be-forgotten message of his Lord and Master: 'Little children, love one another! Little children, love one another!'



## *Saint Luke*

OCTOBER 18

'*ST LUKE'S SUMMER!*' people exclaim when the weather suddenly changes and we get a few days of sunshine in the middle of October. Some might be at a loss to explain the connection with St Luke, but it is, of course, fairly obvious. It so happens that this particular spell of fine autumnal weather often coincides with the Feast of St Luke on October 18th, and it has therefore become known as St Luke's little summer.

St Luke, 'the beloved physician,' is the patron saint of doctors, and also of artists. A doctor by profession, he is traditionally said to have been skilled as an artist, and paintings have been ascribed to him. He was the close friend and travelling companion of St Paul, and stayed with the great apostle during his imprisonment in Rome – 'only Luke is with me,' writes St Paul, in the Second Epistle to Timothy. Above all, he was the author of the Gospel bearing his name, and of the Acts of the Apostles, in the latter part of which he gives vivid descriptions of incidents in which he shared and scenes of which he was an eye witness. When he himself was not an eye witness, he was careful to consult those who had been, and to sift the evidence carefully. At the beginning of his Gospel he writes: 'Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed to me also, having had perfect understanding

of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.' Here, obviously, is a man who had been in close personal contact with those, 'who had been with Jesus.'

There are indications in St Paul's epistles that St Luke was a much-loved member of the Early Church. He was almost certainly a Gentile, and he is believed to have been one of the first Christians in the city of Antioch. He is traditionally identified with 'the brother' in the eighth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: 'we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches.' Some have identified him with the second of the disciples who met with the Risen Christ on the road to Emmaus. The name of one, Cleopas, is clearly given, and it would seem very possible that the other may have been the author, who preferred to remain anonymous. Others have recently suggested that this second disciple may have been a woman, and that the two were man and wife; this is an attractive theory, because it gives inspiration to those who stress the value of the family in the life of the Church, but it seems hardly likely that St Luke, who more than any other evangelist gave prominence to the contribution of women to the Gospel story, would in that case have omitted the description and name.

St Luke lived to a great age and was buried at Thebes, whence his remains were later transferred to Constantinople. His two great books reveal their author as a man of insight, integrity and human sympathy, such a man as might well rejoice to know that his name lives on in the title given to those all-too-short, refreshing days of sunshine which bring warmth and loveliness and joy to uplift our hearts before the winter sets in.



## *Saint Mark*

APRIL 25

*MARK*, or John Mark as he is called when first we meet him in the Bible, was a cousin of St Barnabas, and both are believed to have known Jesus. John Mark is said to have been a son of the family in whose home the disciples used to meet, the home with the upper room in which the Last Supper took place. Tradition has it that he was the youth who was very nearly captured by the soldiers after the betrayal and arrest of Jesus, but who escaped by leaving his sole garment – a ‘linen cloth’ – in their clutching hands as he ‘fled from them naked.’ It seems as if, suddenly aroused from sleep and sensing danger, he had flung a sheet around himself and rushed out into the darkness after Jesus and His disciples, possibly to warn them of treachery, or possibly out of youthful curiosity.

The story about the young man in the linen cloth only occurs in St Mark’s Gospel, which suggests that it was of more importance to him than to the other evangelists, and this would naturally have been the case if he himself had been personally involved. Other writers would not let their readers’ attention be distracted at this point from the central Figure in the drama, but Mark surely would never forget that brief, torch-lit, fleeting impression – the menacing soldiers, the imminent danger, the treacherous voice saying ‘Master, Master!’, the disciples fleeing into the night, and the calm face of Jesus who ‘having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.’

It must have seemed to John Mark that the great opportunity of his life had come when his cousin, Barnabas, offered him the chance of going with him and his friend, St Paul, on their first missionary journey. Barnabas was a man of great spiritual strength and deep humility, and he had a wonderful gift for discerning latent spiritual powers in other people, especially younger people. All too often such men are 'let down,' and Barnabas was no exception. John Mark accompanied them eagerly, shared their exciting experiences in Cyprus, and then, when they reached Perga in Pamphylia, on the coast of Asia Minor, with by far the most exacting part of their journey still ahead of them, suddenly 'John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.' Some surmise that he was home-sick, and some that his ardour had cooled; others conjecture that Paul's determination to preach to the Gentiles, and to baptise them into the Christian Church without first insisting on the observance of Jewish laws and rites had scandalised the younger man, who belonged to the more conventional group in Jerusalem.

It takes a man like Barnabas not only to forgive desertion and pusillanimity, but to offer the culprit another chance. When Paul and Barnabas decided to return to the scene of their labours, 'Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.' Paul would have none of him. He saw no sense in asking to be let down a second time. In spite of Barnabas's quiet persistence, he refused even to consider the idea, and in spite of Paul's opposition, Barnabas refused to give up his faith in those latent spiritual powers which he had sensed in John Mark. In the end, the two friends parted company. Paul took Silas as his companion, and Barnabas, giving up his own deep joy in working with Paul, sailed for Cyprus with John Mark. It may be said that we owe the Gospel according to St Mark, in the first instance, to the unselfishness and steadfastness and upholding faith of Barnabas.



In later years, we find in St Paul's Epistles a very different John Mark. 'Take Mark and bring him with thee,' he writes to Timothy, 'for he is profitable to me for the ministry.' Mark became the loved and trusted companion of both St Paul and St Peter in Rome, where he is said to have acted as St Peter's interpreter and to have learned from his lips the stories, events and teachings contained in his Gospel.

The rest of St Mark's life story is shrouded in legend, but he is said to have been martyred in Alexandria. His name is now associated above all with Venice, where his relics are believed to have been preserved, and where his symbol, the lion, stands guard over that proud and lovely city. But behind the symbol of the lion lingers the memory of the man who was given a second chance by somebody who believed in him beyond all reason, in the same way that Jesus believed in Peter, with the fiery, irresistible, unyielding faith which can transform a runaway into a saint.

## *Saint Matthew*

SEPTEMBER 21

*MATTHEW* (or Levi) was a 'publican,' or tax-gatherer, and therefore a very unpopular person in the community, for his country was under the dominion of Rome and he was thus identified with the oppressor. In the opinion of his fellow-countrymen, he and his colleagues were screwing money out of their own people for the benefit of the hated alien ruler, and doubtless feathering their own nests into the bargain. 'Exact no more than that which is appointed you,' John the Baptist had said to the publicans who came with the crowds who flocked to him for baptism; he knew very well that these hated officials for the most part made a practice of battenning on their victims.

Much of Matthew's story is obscure. Nothing is known of his early days, and legend vies with legend concerning the manner of his death. The one fact which cannot be disputed concerns the way in which he responded to the opportunity which proved to be the turning point of his life. He was sitting 'at the receipt of custom,' carrying out his official duties, when Jesus came by with some of His friends.

'Follow Me!' said Jesus.

In one breathless moment the decision had to be made. Matthew rose from his place, swept his work aside, and without any hesitation or any question followed his Master.

Afterwards Matthew gave a feast, and Jesus came and sat down with what must have seemed to many a curious assembly of fellow-guests - tax-gatherers, and cheats, and women of



easy virtue. The Pharisees were scandalised and asked His disciples what He could be thinking of, to consort with such people. Jesus overheard their arguments and quietly intervened. 'They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,' He said. 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

Scholars dispute the authorship of the Gospel which bears St Matthew's name. Some believe him to have been the author; some reject the idea, because of the copious quotations and adaptations from St Mark – what need could one of Our Lord's personal friends have had to resort to any other authority? Others follow the age-old tradition that St Matthew did indeed make a collection of the sayings and teachings of Jesus, and that these must have been used as a basis for the Gospel which, written by a later hand, bears the honoured name of one who recognised the great opportunity of his life when it came and so 'left all, rose up and followed Him.'

## *Saint Nicholas or Santa Claus*

DECEMBER 6

*SAINT NICHOLAS*, in the familiar guise of Santa Claus, has come to England from Holland via America. The Dutch settlers who went to the New World in the seventeenth century took with them their tradition of St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, the patron saint of children, who long before the dawn on the day of his feast would come down the chimney in his bishop's robes and leave toys and sweets for all good boys and girls. The children would put their shoes on the hearth before going to bed, hoping for a pleasant surprise in the morning, whatever their records might have been, and they were seldom disappointed.

The St Nicholas legend flourished in its new home, except that it gradually lost its association with the feast of St Nicholas and became part of the Christmas celebration. Early in the nineteenth century, it received nation-wide publicity in the United States through the writings of Washington Irving, who retold the story and described the old Dutch observances. Not long after this, Clement Moore's '*A Visit from St Nicholas*' was published, to become and to remain an American Christmas classic. Here the old tradition is firmly attached to 'the night before Christmas'; the nocturnal visitor is still St Nicholas, but the episcopal vestments have vanished, and his appearance is akin to that of the modern Father Christmas.

He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,  
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;



A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,  
And he looked like a pedlar just opening his pack,  
His eyes how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!  
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry;  
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,  
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow.

The real St Nicholas, the Bishop of Myra, lived in the fourth century, and many legends are attached to his name. He is often represented with three little boys standing in a tub beside him, and this is said to commemorate the occasion when, during a famine, three of his young pupils were kidnapped. They were carried off by a wicked innkeeper, who slaughtered them and pickled their dismembered bodies in brine, to provide meat for his guests. St Nicholas, however, promptly tracked down the murderer, and on finding the tub with its tragic contents, performed a miracle and restored the children to life. On account of this incident, he became the patron saint of children. He is also the patron saint of sailors and travellers, especially travellers faced by sudden danger. His prayers are said to have saved a fine ship which had been overtaken by a fierce storm, and on another occasion his influence preserved the lives of three travellers who had been unjustly condemned to death.

There are many legends concerning the kindness of St Nicholas. One of the most charming tells of a poor man who could not afford dowries for his three daughters. In desperation, he was about to condemn them to a life of shame when St Nicholas heard of their plight. No sudden dramatic gesture saved the situation, for the saint preferred to do good deeds in secret. On three successive nights he walked quietly down the street, past the poor man's house, and each time he threw a bag of gold through the open window, into the room where the innocent girls lay sleeping. This story is shown in a painting,

part of a triptych by Gerard David, in the National Gallery of Scotland; the three girls lie in a row in what appears to be a very hard bed, their heads resting on an uncompromising bolster, two wearing night caps and one with her short, bright hair uncovered. Their father looks distracted with anxiety, as well he may, and the saint's calm face looks in at the window as he brings not only gold, but the peace of mind which is a rarer and more lasting treasure.

Invariably St Nicholas is associated with kindliness, with gifts, and especially with children. In the mediaeval Church, the Boy Bishop was elected on St Nicholas Eve, to hold office until Childermas. (See Holy Innocents or Childermas, page 75.) The Feast of St Nicholas and Childermas were both festivals peculiarly associated with children, and it was on those two days that the Boy Bishop played his part. In modern times, however, and in the English-speaking countries, St Nicholas now belongs essentially to Christmastide. St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, has been immortalised in the burly, jovial figure of Father Christmas, though it is doubtful whether he would recognise himself in that rôle, any more than our mediaeval forbears would recognise the original Father Christmas of the folk tales and mumming plays.



## *Saint Patrick*

MARCH 17

*ST PATRICK* is the patron saint of Ireland, and few can fail to notice St Patrick's Day because of the number of people who wear the shamrock. The shamrock is St Patrick's emblem, for he made apt use of it when teaching the doctrine of the Holy Trinity to some of his Irish converts. Instead of entering into long explanations and dogmatic pronouncements, he stooped to pluck a leaf of the shamrock growing at his feet, and pointed to it as Nature's perfect example of the Three-in-One.

The place of St Patrick's birth is in doubt. Some say it was on the shores of the Solway Firth, some by the Clyde, and others by the Severn. Others again believe him to have been born in Wales. The son of a man of considerable importance in the district, he led a carefree and happy life until, on reaching the age of fifteen, he was kidnapped by pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland. There he was put to work as a swineherd, and in that hard and solitary life he experienced the change of heart which was to make a saint of him.

After some years, in obedience to a Divine command, Patrick made his escape, and following God's guidance, walked for over two hundred miles to a place on the coast, where he found a boat putting off for Gaul with a cargo of Irish wolfhounds. After some difficulty, he persuaded the captain and crew to let him embark, but their misgivings were strengthened when they landed in Gaul, only to find the countryside in utter desolation after the terrible invasion by the Vandals, who ravaged Europe

early in 407. The countryside was lifeless and deserted; there was no market for wolfhounds and no sustenance for strangers. The ship's company turned against Patrick, but he refused to give up hope, and prayed the more fervently to God for help. Before long his prayers were answered, for in their wanderings they came across an abandoned herd of pigs which provided them with enough food and to spare. Thenceforth, whatever difficulties he might have to contend with, Patrick would never lose his sense of utter dependence upon God.

St Patrick's mission to Ireland was undertaken in response to a vision, in which he saw a young Irishman who begged him to return to the scene of his captivity. Naturally reluctant, he yet felt compelled to obey, and after a long period of preparation he set out for Ireland once more, to become in due course the apostle, the prophet and the patron saint of the land where he had been a slave.

St Patrick landed in the autumn of 432, and it was at the following Eastertide that he lit his Paschal Fire on Slane Hill, within sight of the High King's palace at Tara. There, in the magical and mysterious darkness, when on pain of death every fire had to be extinguished that it might be relit from the sacred flame which should blaze forth from Tara's halls, St Patrick's Paschal fire shone out from the hilltop, to challenge the old gods and to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. At the sight of it, the High King summoned his druids, his wizards and his warriors to contend with this new and potent force, but all their efforts were in vain. 'Some put their faith in chariots and horses,' said St Patrick, 'but we in the Lord our God.'

St Patrick's feast is kept on the anniversary of his death, but he is also honoured on the last Sunday in July, when thousands of bare-footed pilgrims climb Croagh Patrick, in northern Connemara. On this mountain, in 440, St Patrick spent the whole of Lent in solitude and prayer. It was on Croagh Patrick,



so the legend says, that the saint rang his bell and then flung it far from him into the abyss, only to have it returned by invisible hands, and it was at the last sounding of that bell that all snakes and poisonous reptiles were banished from the soil of Ireland. Be that as it may, St Patrick certainly banished from Ireland much that was evil, and left behind him a light which, like his Paschal Fire, has never been put out.

## *Saint Stephen*

DECEMBER 26

(which is also BOXING DAY save when this  
date falls on a Sunday)

*BOXING DAY* is of course a secular festival, named for the custom of presenting 'Christmas boxes,' generally to people who have done good service during the year. The word 'Box' can mean a fund kept for a special purpose – literally money saved in a money box; the London Quakers still have a committee called the Box Meeting, founded in the seventeenth century, which uses the word in this sense.

St Stephen's Day is known to many solely on account of the carol, '*Good King Wenceslas*,' which tells us that the monarch looked out of his window 'on the Feast of Stephen.' In folklore, the day is associated with the extraordinary custom of 'hunting the wren,' which probably has origins going back to a period long before the introduction of Christianity. The wren is regarded as a sacred bird; to rob a wren's nest is considered to be unlucky, and according to an old Welsh saying, the culprit 'shall never enjoy good health in his life.' On St Stephen's Day, however, this little bird is doomed to be hunted, killed, and paraded from house to house by the 'wren boys.' The custom survived in many districts until within living memory; in Ireland the dead wrens were carried in a decorated gorse bush or a holly bush, whereas the Welsh 'wren boys' used a stable lantern or a specially constructed 'wren house.' The observance was widespread, especially in the north and west of England, the Isle of Man, Wales and Ireland. Many variants of the songs



sung by the 'wren boys' survive, most of them opening with the couplet:

The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,  
St Stephen's Day he was caught in the furze.

How the elusive little birds could be caught in such numbers seems a mystery, but Mrs Elizabeth Bassett, in a letter to *Country Life* in 1962 produced an interesting explanation. Apparently the wrens often seek a communal roosting place in winter, and Mrs Bassett actually observed at least thirty of them crowding into a hole in the roof of a shed. To find one of these communal nests would obviously make the 'hunting of the wren' a comparatively simple affair.

The Christian tradition explaining this custom is that a wren sang and aroused the guards just as St Stephen was about to escape from prison, but it is probable that the 'hunting of the wren' took place long before the Christian era.

St Stephen was the first Christian martyr, a man of magnificent faith and courage. He was one of the seven deacons appointed by the apostles to attend to the more practical needs of the growing Christian community, and St Luke describes him as being at this time 'a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.' He was accused by his enemies of blasphemy and brought up before the Sanhedrin, where 'all that sat in the council saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.' He made a brave stand before his accusers, and in his famous discourse to the Sanhedrin he recapitulated the history of the Jews and claimed that Jesus Christ, whom they had rejected and slain, was indeed the promised Messiah.

'Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart and ears,' he declared, 'ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of

the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.'

St Stephen was rushed out of the council chamber and out of the city, and stoned to death. His murderers, so it was remembered afterwards, first removed their outer garments and piled them up at the feet of a young man 'whose name was Saul.' This Saul, now 'consenting to his death,' was to be the great apostle Paul, who would carry the Christian witness out into the world.

'And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.'



## *Saint Swithin*

JULY 15

*EVERYBODY* remembers St Swithin's Day because of the old tradition that if it rains on that day, it will rain on the next forty days.

St Swithin was Bishop of Winchester in the ninth century and had much influence at court. He was a man of great humility and kindliness, who would always walk if possible rather than ride, and never sought the privileges of rank or wealth. When he was about to die, he asked that his body should be laid to rest in the churchyard, where the poor were buried, and where the rain and the dew might fall upon his grave, rather than amongst the tombs of the great in the minster he had loved so well. His friends, however, could not bring themselves to carry out this last request, so they buried him with due honour and magnificence in the minster, whereupon it rained continuously for forty days, until at last they gave in and fulfilled their Bishop's last wish. Later on, however, the remains of St Swithin were transferred to a shrine in the cathedral, and this became a place of pilgrimage, where many miracles were wrought. The shrine was destroyed at the Reformation, but the memory of St Swithin is still kept green in the old tradition attached to his name.

## *Saint Valentine*

FEBRUARY 14

A NUMBER of old customs and traditions belong to St Valentine's Day, but information concerning the saint himself is singularly uncertain and confused. The only thing which seems certain is that the day commemorates a martyrdom. Two St Valentines are honoured, one a Roman priest, and the other Bishop of Terni, and both are said to have been martyred on the same day, which inclines some authorities to the opinion that both are one and the same. Whatever the truth of the matter may be, it is certain that the traditions of St Valentine's Day have nothing to do with St Valentine, though one suspects that any but the most austere saint would be happy to be associated with a festival of lovers. In some districts young girls believe that the first boy they see on St Valentine's Day will be their future husband, and great precautions are taken to make sure that the right boy comes into view at the right moment. Everywhere young people exchange valentines – decorated cards, which are sometimes home-made and sometimes bought – but this is not necessarily done with any serious intent. One of the most revealing stories about the Brontë sisters tells of the discovery by their father's young curate, William Weightman, that not one of them had ever received a valentine. He repaired the omission himself, walking all the way from Haworth to Bradford and back – roughly twenty miles in all – to post them and preserve his secret.

The association of the day with young lovers probably de-



rives from a Roman festival which took place at about the same time. Another association dates from the Middle Ages, when it was believed that the birds began to mate on February 14. Chaucer mentions this in *The Parlement of Foules*:

For this was on seynt Valentyne's day  
When every foul cometh ther to chese his make,  
Of every kinde, that men thenke may.

## *Saint Vitus*

JUNE 15

*F*EW people know anything about St Vitus, yet his name is almost universally familiar owing to its association with the distressing complaint known as St Vitus's Dance. The correct name for this disease is chorea, and it is characterised by convulsive movements, caused by involuntary contractions of the muscles.

St Vitus was a fourth-century martyr, the son of pagan parents. He is said to have been converted secretly by his nurse, and to have perished with her and her husband in the persecution under Diocletian. Traditionally, his name has long been associated with health, and the cure of sickness of mind and body.



*Septuagesima Sunday*  
*and*  
*Sexagesima Sunday*

*SEXAGESIMA* is the second, and *Septuagesima* the third Sunday before Lent. *Sexagesima* means sixtieth and *Septuagesima* seventieth, and these are intended to refer to the number of days before Easter. Strictly speaking, they would not appear to be numerically correct, but actually the series begins with *Quinquagesima* Sunday, which is exactly fifty days before Easter.

## *Shrove Tuesday*

*SHROVE TUESDAY* is the day before Ash Wednesday and the last before Lent. Its name derives from the 'shriving' – confession and absolution – which used to be customary on this day. Traditionally, Shrove Tuesday is inseparably associated with the eating of pancakes, which were originally intended to use up all the eggs, butter and milk in the house before the season of Lent began. These foodstuffs are now allowed in Lent, but in spite of this, pancakes are still a feature of Shrove Tuesday and contribute to the popularity of the festival, especially with children.

A number of old customs and traditions are still kept in connection with Shrove Tuesday. In some places a 'Pancake Bell' is rung, and at Olney, in Buckinghamshire, there is a famous Pancake Race, run by young housewives, who race with their frying pans to the church porch, where the winner receives a kiss from the bell-ringer. The day is often associated with communal games and boisterous fun. Whole villages turn out to play a kind of traditional, free-for-all football game; in university towns the students indulge in 'ragging'; and in the districts where the old custom of 'barring out the schoolmaster' once flourished, it is often customary for the schoolchildren to have a holiday.

Some of the traditional customs make Shrove Tuesday a peculiarly happy festival; others sometimes produce riot and disorder. Nevertheless the main purpose and message of the



day often tend to be overlooked and forgotten. Shrove Tuesday is more than a holiday, and more than an occasion for the eating of innumerable pancakes; it is intended to be a time of relaxation in preparation for a prolonged period of self-discipline, and self-denial and self-sacrifice.

## *Stir-up Sunday*

*THOSE* who come across recipes for Stir-up Sunday cake are often completely mystified as to the occasion on which this delicious confection is supposed to be eaten. Stir-up Sunday is the Sunday before Advent, and it gains its name from the opening words of the Collect for the day:

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



## Thanksgiving Day

*THIS* great national religious festival of the United States takes place on the fourth Thursday in November. The idea originated in New England, at Boston, where in 1621 a day of thanksgiving for the harvest was ordered by Governor Bradford of the Plymouth colony. In preparation for this feast, the pilgrims went into the forest to shoot turkeys, and brought them back to the settlement amid general rejoicing. Then the Indians, realising what was afoot, came with deer, and all feasted together.

In 1863, Mrs Sarah J. Hales, editor of the *Ladies Magazine*, suggested that this idea should be revived, and that it should provide the basis for a great national festival. Thus Thanksgiving Day came into being and grew steadily in importance, becoming an occasion for the strengthening of home ties and the deepening of the national life.

## Transfiguration

AUGUST 6

*THIS* festival commemorates the occasion when Jesus took his closest friends, Peter and James and John, up into a solitary mountain, where his glory was revealed to them. It is a late festival, for it was only made general in the fifteenth century, and the incident it commemorates is far outside ordinary human experience. Nevertheless, the story reveals how human the reactions of the apostles were; and remembering how superhuman these men were to become, and what astonishing achievements they were to perform, there is much encouragement here for everyday Christians. The account as given in the Gospel according to St Mark, with stormy Peter's baffled bewilderment – 'for he wist not what to say' – strengthens the theory that in Mark we have the reminiscences of the great apostle himself.

And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. *St Mark, Chapter 9, verses 2-8*



## *Trinity Sunday*

*TRINITY SUNDAY* falls on the Sunday after Whitsuntide (see page 169). It is a feast in honour of the Trinity, and thus brings to a close the liturgical commemoration of the life of Christ which opens with Advent. The festival is late in origin: it began to be observed early in the tenth century and was not made obligatory until early in the fourteenth century.

Many find the doctrine of the Trinity hard to comprehend and have to fall back on St Patrick's simple example of the shamrock leaf; to others it seems perfectly natural that God is too great to be contained in any one conception of His nature or any one image of His being. Some would reject the doctrine out of hand. Yet surely all Christians may join in thanksgiving for the infinite wonder of the revelation of God, in the loving Father of mankind; in Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour of mankind; and in the Holy Spirit, the Guide and Comforter of mankind.

## *Twelfth Night*

JANUARY 6

*EVERYBODY* knows that there are Twelve Days of Christmas, because of the old rhyme:

The first day of Christmas, my true love sent to me  
A partridge in a pear tree.

This rhyme continues cumulatively, each day bringing its special gift, until it reaches the twelfth and last day of Christmas:

The twelfth day of Christmas, my true love sent to me  
Twelve lords a-leaping, eleven ladies dancing,  
Ten pipers piping, nine drummers drumming,  
Eight maids a-milking, seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying, five gold rings,  
Four colly birds, three French hens,  
Two turtle doves, and  
A partridge in a pear tree.

In the old Twelfth Night parties, this was a popular game, in which anybody who forgot the order of the gifts, or omitted one, would be liable to pay a forfeit. Little else remains of these riotous Twelfth Night parties, which used to be at once the climax and the close of the Christmas festivities. All manner of traditional games and customs were enjoyed, but the indispensable feature was the Twelfth Night cake. This was a huge cake of which everybody had to partake; in it were concealed a bean



and a pea, and the reveller who found the bean in his slice would be King for the evening, while she who discovered the pea would be Queen.

For the most part, this traditional merry-making has vanished. The Twelfth Night cake has become the Christmas cake; the parties are held at any time during the Christmas season, with no Kings or Queens to preside over the revellers; only the old rhyme survives, with the title of Shakespeare's play, and the continuing tradition that Twelfth Night marks the end of Christmas, so that the decorations must come down from the walls, and the Christmas cards from the mantelpiece.

(See also Epiphany, page 57)

## *Whitsuntide*

*WHITSUNTIDE* falls on the fiftieth day after Easter and commemorates the feast of Pentecost, when the Apostles received the Holy Spirit. At first, the Christian festival bore the same name as the Jewish one which it superseded; in France it is still called Pentecôte, and in Italy Pentecosta. In England, however, the name of Whitsuntide became attached to the festival at about the time of the Norman Conquest. The derivation appears to be simple. Whit Sunday is the White Sunday, and gains its name from the white garments of the new converts flocking to church for baptism on the feast of Pentecost during the early days of Christianity in Britain.

Whitsuntide marks the glorious beginning of the story of the Christian Church. Jesus had told the disciples 'that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father' – the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus they had remained together in the city, faithful to Christ's command, and at the Feast of Pentecost, when 'there were all with one accord in one place,' the gift had come with such wonder, and such overwhelming power, that they could scarcely find words to describe it. It was like a rushing, mighty wind which shook their hearts, and like cloven tongues of fire upon their heads; it filled onlookers with amazement, and made some say mockingly: 'These men are full of new wine.' Then Peter, formerly the impetuous, the unstable, the disciple who had denied his Lord, stood out like a new man, the born leader, the man who



had at last entered into the birthright which Jesus alone had known to be his, and declared Christ to the people. 'Then they that gladly received his word were baptised: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.'

Some of the Whitsuntide customs which are still observed today bear witness to a pre-Christian origin – for example, the beautiful well-dressing ceremonies in certain Derbyshire villages. The wells are 'dressed' with wooden frames on which large mosaic pictures are created, representing scenes from the Bible story. The mosaic work is carried out entirely in flower petals, leaves and mosses, and is in itself a most intricate traditional craft. Clergy and people come together to give thanks for the gift of pure water, a scene which would have delighted St Francis, who spoke lovingly of 'our sister water, who is very serviceable to us, and humble, and precious, and clean.'

Many branches of the Christian Church, and many places of worship, hold processions at Whitsuntide as an act of witness, and the most notable of these are to be seen in Manchester, where the normal routine and traffic of the great city are entirely and willingly set aside and disrupted for two days on account of the Anglican and the Roman Catholic 'Whitsuntide Walks.' Thousands of people go in procession through the streets, each church behind its banner, with children carrying flowers, and little girls in new white dresses which many a poor home must have sacrificed a great deal to provide. Occasional efforts have been made to deflect the Whitsuntide Walks from the heart of the city, but traditional loyalties have proved too strong. Thus one of the greatest cities in England, with a proud record in commerce, industry, music and drama, at this one season of the year lays all else aside so that its citizens may witness to the power of the Holy Spirit.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

*The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 1, verses 1-4*



*A Brief Glossary of  
Christian Terminology*

## SOME SIGNIFICANT TERMS

**ABSOLUTION.** For some, the forgiveness of sins by Christ, pronounced to the penitent by priest or minister; for others, Christ's forgiveness experienced in the heart by the contrite.

**ABSTINENCE.** Abstaining from certain kinds of food, drink, pleasure or human activity for reasons of spiritual discipline or for the sake of others.

**ADORATION.** The uplifting of the heart in wonder to God, and to God alone.

**AFFIRMATION.** Declaration made in place of an oath by those who have a conscientious objection to taking an oath.

**AGNOSTICISM.** School of thought believing that all knowledge must be based on natural and material phenomena, and that the existence of God and of an unseen world cannot be proved.

**APOSTASY.** Deliberate and intentional abandonment of Christianity and denial of faith.

**APOSTLE.** Literally, messenger or envoy. Name given to the close companions of Jesus Christ, on whom He relied for the spreading of the Gospel; also given to Barnabas and Paul, and to those who take, or have taken, the Gospel for the first time into other lands, or to other peoples and groups.

**APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.** For some, the claim that authority in the Church has descended in unbroken succession from the Apostles to the Bishops of today; for others, the unbroken succession of spiritual authority through Christ from the Early Church to the world-wide Christian Church of today.



ASCETICISM. Rigorous self-denial and self-discipline for the sake of others, or for the perfection of the spiritual life.

ATHEISM. Disbelief in and denial of the existence of God.

ATONEMENT. At-one-ment with God through Christ.

BAPTISM. The rite administered by the sprinkling or pouring of water on the head, or by the total immersion of the body, which signifies initiation and acceptance into the Church, purification from sin, and spiritual regeneration. By many Christians, this rite is considered essential for salvation; others believe that it symbolises a spiritual baptism which can and should be experienced by every Christian, with or without the rite.

BENEDICTION. The bestowal of a blessing, whether in a form of words or through a heightened consciousness of the Presence of God.

BLASPHEMY. Words or actions which revile God or make mock of sacred things.

CATECHISM. A course of instruction in the Christian faith, given through questions and answers, to be studied and memorised by those seeking Church membership. Several branches of the Christian Church, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Lutherans among them, have catechisms.

COMMUNION OF SAINTS. "I believe in the Communion of Saints" therefore means precisely this – "I believe in the *Fellowship of Christians*." (Rev. Percy Dearmer.)

COMMUNION SERVICE. The service at which, in varying forms according to the rites of the different churches, Holy Communion is administered – the bread and wine which symbolise the body which was broken and the blood which was shed on Calvary. Those Christians who do not share this rite, while regarding it with deep reverence, believe in the inner communion which it signifies, which they feel to be beyond all

ritual, and the supreme experience of all who hold the Christian faith. (See also *Eucharist, Mass* and the *Lord's Supper*.)

CONFESSION. The repentant acknowledgement of wrong-doing, which is often an important part of the liturgy; often a regular requirement of the individual Christian by the branch of the Church to which he belongs, if regular Confession to a Priest is the rule; always an essential part of the prayer life of those who seek to draw closer to God.

CONFIRMATION. The rite by which young people, and others wishing to belong to certain branches of the Christian Church, make their religious profession, accept the responsibilities of membership and receive the blessing of the Church. In these churches, only those who have been confirmed may take Communion.

CONSCIENCE. The inner conviction of right and wrong which, under God's guidance, should determine the action of the individual.

CONSECRATE. To dedicate to God, to set apart as sacred, according to the practice of many Christians, a building, or land, or an article for Church use; according to the faith of all Christians, to dedicate one's life.

CONSUBSTANTIAL. Of the same substance. This word is often used in connection with the Holy Trinity - 'Consubstantial, co-eternal.' (Rev. J. M. Neale.)

CONTEMPLATION. Prayer which consists, not of words or even of active thoughts, but of an acute and growing awareness of God.

CONVERSION. A change of life, especially in the acceptance of the Christian faith, which can be a sudden, dramatic experience, or a gradual one.

CROSS. The wooden cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified and suffered the ignominious and agonising death from which He rose again, triumphant, on the third day. The Cross has



become the symbol of God's redeeming love for mankind; the sublime token of self-sacrifice; and the inspiration of all who suffer for their faith or for the sake of others. 'Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me' (Mark 8 : 34). 'Our love is the measure of the cross we can bear' (St Teresa). 'He that hath no cross deserves no crown' (Francis Quarles). 'No Cross, no crown' (William Penn). 'Simply to Thy Cross I cling' (A. M. Toplady).

**DAMNATION.** Condemnation resulting from the utter rejection of the will of God. For some this signifies eternal punishment; for some, utter obliteration; others regard this state as beyond human definition save as the final consequence of sin.

**DISCIPLE.** A pupil; a follower; a learner in the school of Christ.

**DISCIPLINE.** The rules of Church Government have become known as the Discipline in several branches of the Christian Church.

**DOGMA.** A doctrine or belief defined and upheld by the Church.

**ECSTASY.** The overpowering rapture or state of trance experienced by the mystic in the presence of God.

**ECUMENICAL.** World-wide. The Ecumenical Movement seeks to draw the branches of the Christian Church nearer together, in the hope of achieving a unity that shall transcend their different interpretations and observances. The World Council of Churches is an expression of this desire, which is not confined to the churches which have accepted its formula.

**ELECT.** The Chosen of God who, according to some, alone can experience salvation, whereas according to others, Jesus Christ has opened the way of salvation for all mankind.

**ENTHUSIASM.** In addition to its more familiar meaning of eagerness and vigour in pursuit of an object of a cause, this

word can mean extravagant, unbalanced and over-emotional behaviour.

ESCHATOLOGY. Theology concerning the last things and the end of time.

ETHICS. The science of morals.

EUCCHARIST. A Greek word meaning 'thanksgiving' which signifies the celebration of Holy Communion. (See also *Communion*, *Mass* and the *Lord's Supper*.)

EVANGELISM. The preaching of the Gospel with missionary zeal.

EXEGESIS. Explanation, criticism and interpretation of the Scriptures.

FAITH. The inner conviction by which a man lives.

FALL. Man's wilful disobedience to God, which is symbolised in the story of Adam and Eve in *Genesis*.

GODPARENTS. In churches where Infant Baptism is the rule, the Godparents are the sponsors of the child, undertake that he shall be brought up in the Christian faith, and make promises on his behalf which he will take up at Confirmation. The relationship between Godparent and child can be most helpful and happy.

GOSPEL. Good news. 'And Jesus went about all Galilee . . . preaching the gospel of the kingdom' (Matthew 4 : 23). 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature' (Matthew, 16 : 15). 'I have fully preached the gospel of Christ' (Romans, 15 : 19).

GRACE. The presence of God felt, shown or experienced in a human life.

HEAVEN. To some a place, to some a state of being. In short, where God rules: on earth, beyond the grave, in the heart.



HELL. To some a place, to some a state of being. In short, where God is rejected: on earth, beyond the grave, in the heart.

HERESY. Independent thought resulting in views differing from orthodox belief.

HOLY. Dedicated to God; set apart; a quality recognisably associated with the divine influence.

HUMANISM. The study of, and faith in, human nature.

HYPOCRISY. Hollow pretence of virtue: a sham.

IMMANENCE. The Presence of God in His Creation.

IMMORTALITY. Life Everlasting.

INCARNATION. God revealed in Jesus Christ. 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1 : 14).

INNER LIGHT. The In-dwelling Spirit of God as experienced the human soul. 'The true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (John 1 : 9).

JUSTIFICATION. A doctrine of Divine forgiveness received through faith in Christ which has been variously interpreted. 'Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus' (I Corinthians 6 : 11). 'By justification is to be understood a really being made righteous' (Robert Barclay). 'The plain Scriptural notion of Justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins' (Wesley: quoted in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary).

KINGDOM OF GOD. Where man, of his own free will, acknowledges the rule of God. Regarded by some as a future state, by others as something already in existence, a kingdom of the spirit. 'The kingdom of God is within you' (Luke 17 : 21).

LITURGY. Order of Service or prescribed form of worship.

LITURGICAL COLOURS. The sequence of colours considered proper to be used in cathedrals and churches – e.g. blue or

violet for Advent, white from Christmas to Epiphany, and for Easter, green after Epiphany, white linen for Lent, crimson for Passiontide and red for Whitsuntide, etc. There is, however, no absolute rule in these matters.

LORD'S SUPPER. A name frequently used by Protestants, especially by Nonconformists, to denote the Communion Service. (See also *Communion*, *Eucharist* and *Mass*.)

MASS. A name for the Eucharist or Holy Communion which is always used in Roman Catholic churches by age-old custom, and occasionally amongst High Anglicans. It derives from the words of dismissal in the Roman ritual: 'Ite, missa est.' (See also *Communion*, *Eucharist* and the *Lord's Supper*.)

METEMPSYCHOSIS. Transmigration of souls. The theory that life is a continuous passage from one existence to another until perfection is achieved, which from time to time arouses interest but is not included in Christian doctrine.

MIRACLE. A happening, attributed to divine intervention, which cannot be explained by what is at present known of the laws of Nature.

MONOTHEISM. The belief in one God.

MORTIFICATION. The practice of an austere self-discipline, often through acceptance of extreme discomfort, deprivation of legitimate pleasure, and pain.

MYSTIC. One who seeks to practise a direct approach to God and communion with Him. 'He who hath attained thereto, asketh nothing further, for he hath found the Kingdom of Heaven and Eternal Life on earth.' (*Theologica Germanica*).

ORIGINAL SIN. The doctrine of the innate sinfulness of mankind, attributed to the Fall which, when carried to its extreme, precludes the attainment of perfection in this life. Cf. 'Be ye



therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (Matthew 5 : 48).

**PACIFISM.** The belief that all war is wrong and, from the Christian point of view, incompatible with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

**PARABLE.** A simple story about familiar things, used to convey a spiritual meaning. Much of the teaching of Jesus was given in parables.

**PASSION.** The suffering and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**PASSOVER.** The great Jewish festival commemorating the Exodus from Egypt and culminating in a sacrificial meal, which was last celebrated by our Lord with His disciples immediately before His Passion. 'With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer' (Luke 22 : 15).

**PRAYER.** Communion with God, in words or in silence, in public or in private, singly or in groups, on specified occasions, in religious observances, or as part of a prayer-life which can be the background of all human activity.

**PREDESTINATION.** The doctrine which, in its extreme form, limits salvation to those for whom it is thought to have been predestined by God.

**REDEMPTION.** The ransoming of a captive or a slave, and thus the delivery of mankind from sin and the fear of death, through the Incarnation and the Death and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. A Redemption offered by the Love of God, received in the Love of God, and shared through the Love of God.

**REGENERATION.** Spiritual rebirth, held by many to be conferred through Baptism; by others through acceptance of Christ; by others through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**RESURRECTION.** That Christ rose from the dead on the third day

after the Crucifixion is a basic Christian belief. 'And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus' (Acts 4 : 33).

REVELATION. The revelation of God's Truth: to some contained in the Holy Scriptures; to some in the Church and its doctrines; to others, who believe in a Continuing Revelation, in both of these and also in the workings of the Holy Spirit down the ages.

RETREAT. A period spent with others in religious exercise, in silence, prayer, meditation and contemplation, usually under the direction of a wise leader.

REVIVAL. A time of intense religious activity, expressed in vigorous evangelism, powerful preaching, and prayer meetings, which can lead to an increased interest in religion and a better way of life, but if unwisely directed can also lead to mass hysteria.

SACRAMENT. 'The outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace' (Book of Common Prayer). Some branches of the Christian Church uphold seven Sacraments – Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Ordination and Matrimony. Of these seven, some regard two, Baptism and the Eucharist, as 'ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel,' and so essential to salvation. At least two branches of the Christian Church have no sacramental observances, but hold that the Christian life should in itself be sacramental.

SACRIFICE. An offering made to God: ideally the whole life and service of the worshipper. 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service' (Romans 12 : 7).

SACRILEGE. Mocking, outrageous or violent behaviour towards what are regarded as sacred things.



**SALVATION.** The saving of a soul, or of a people, or of a nation, which can come through utter faith in Christ. 'For the son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost' (Luke 18 : 10). 'The Cross is the means of salvation' (William Temple).

**SCHISM.** Division and disunity in the Church, characterised by lack of charity and mutual hostility.

**SECOND ADAM.** A name for Christ, contrasting Him with Adam, through whom it was believed that sin and death came into the world. 'For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive' (I Corinthians 15 : 21-22).

**SECOND COMING.** The Second Coming of Christ, which the early Christians believed was imminent. It is now regarded by many Christians as something which is to be prepared for and expected, but the time and manner of which are unpredictable. 'We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge' (Te Deum). Others claim that the Second Coming is in the here and now, as the human heart yields itself to Christ and realises His Presence. 'Christ is come to teach His people Himself' (George Fox).

**SIN.** An offence against God: deliberate wrong-doing: a closing of the heart against God's love and His redeeming power.

**SOUL.** The spiritual entity of man. 'What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' (Matthew 8 : 36).

**SPIRITUAL HEALING.** The cure of the sick in mind and body through prayer, intercession, and the practice of the Presence of God, often in conjunction with the sacramental rites of the Church. Some have a natural gift which can be cultivated and used in a 'ministry of healing.'

**TEMPERANCE.** The practice of the virtue of temperance involves restraint and self-control with regard to bodily desires and

appetites, pleasure and the love of ease. It is not the same thing as abstinence, though often regarded as such, but abstinence may be the right course for an individual to take.

TEMPTATION. This is generally thought of as incitement to wrong-doing, though it can be used in the sense of putting to the test, or proving.

TOLERATION. Respecting the religious beliefs, convictions and practices of others, even when they differ from one's own. A principle more easy to accept than to practise. 'When shall we have men of a universal spirit? Everyone desires to have liberty but none will give it' (Oliver Cromwell).

TRANSUBSTANTIATION. The doctrine which holds that the bread and wine of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) are transformed by consecration into the actual Body and Blood of Christ, leaving only the appearance of the elements. This doctrine was repudiated by the Reformed Churches at the Reformation. It is still an integral part of the faith of the Church of Rome.

TRINITY. The doctrine of the Trinity is accepted by the majority of Christians as one of the basic tenets of Christianity, though some, in especial the Unitarians, reject it. The belief in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as three aspects of the One God may be regarded as 'the brief summary statement of Christian people's experience of God' (William Temple).

UNCTION. Anointing with oil as a religious observance. Familiar to most as an integral part of the Coronation Service, it is used also in certain services for the healing of the sick, and also, in some branches of the Christian Church, at the approach of death – Extreme Unction.

VIRGIN BIRTH. The belief that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was not, in the physical sense, the son of Joseph. This belief is held to be unassailable by many: others



regard the scriptural evidence as based on a mistranslation. Such would devoutly uphold the Incarnation whilst doubting the Virgin Birth.

WORSHIP. The worship due to God, which is more even than public worship, religious observances or private devotions. 'God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth' (John 4 : 24).

### SOME FAMILIAR WORDS AND PHRASES IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

ABBA (*Aramaic*). Father.

ADONAI (*Hebrew*). The Lord.

AGAPE (*Greek*). Holy love: heavenly love: the love-feast of the Early Christians.

AGNUS DEI (*Latin*). The Lamb of God.

ALLELUIA (*Hebrew*). Praise the Lord.

ALPHA AND OMEGA (*Greek*). The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.

AMEN (*Hebrew*). Verily: truly: so be it.

ANATHEMA (*Greek*). Suspended: cut off: accursed.

ANIMA CHRISTI (*Latin*). Soul of Christ.

ANNO DOMINI (*Latin*). In the year of our Lord.

AVE MARIA (*Latin*). Hail Mary.

DEO GRATIAS (*Latin*). Thanks be to God.

EMMANUEL (*Hebrew*). God be with us.

EROS (*Greek*). Sensual love: earthly love.

EUCCHARIST (*Greek*). Thanksgiving. (Name given to Holy Communion, or the Mass.)

EX CATHEDRA (*Latin*). From the throne (referring to an official pronouncement of the Pope).

FIDEI DEFENSOR (*Latin*). Defender of the Faith.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO (*Latin*). Glory to God in the Highest.  
HOSANNA (*Greek form of Hebrew word*). Save us, we pray! (An exclamation both of prayer and praise.)

ICHABOD (*Hebrew*). The glory is departed.

IMPRIMATUR (*Latin*). Let it be printed.

JEHOVAH or YAHWEH (*Hebrew*). God.

KYRIE ELEISON (*Greek*). Lord have mercy.

LAUS DEO (*Latin*). Praise to God.

LOGIA (*Greek*). Sayings. (A name given to the lost collection of the sayings of Jesus which is believed to have been one of the sources of the Gospels.)

LOGOS (*Greek*). The Word. (See John 1 : 1 - 14.)

LUX MUNDI (*Latin*). Light of the World.

MADONNA (*Italian*). My Lady (name for the Virgin Mary).

MAGI (*Latin derived from Greek*). The Wise Men.

MAGNIFICAT (*Latin*). The first word of the Virgin Mary's song in the second chapter of Luke: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.'

NUNC DIMITTIS (*Latin*). The first words of Simeon's song in the second chapter of Luke: 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.'

PARACLETE (*Greek*). Advocate: the Holy Spirit.

PAROUSIA (*Greek*). The Second Coming.

PATER NOSTER (*Latin*). Our Father.

QUO VADIS? (*Latin*). Whither goest thou?

REQUIESCAT IN PACE (*Latin*). May he rest in peace.

RESURGAM (*Latin*). I shall rise again.

SABAOOTH (*Hebrew*). Armies: hosts.

SABBATH (*from the Hebrew Shabbeth*). Day of rest: seventh day of the week.

SANCTUS (*Latin*). Holy.

SHEKINAH (*Hebrew*). Dwelling.

SHEOL (*Hebrew*). Underworld.



SURSAM CORDA (*Latin*). Lift up your hearts.

TE DEUM (*Latin*). First words of Latin hymn used in Christian worship: 'Te deum laudamus' – 'We praise thee, O God.'

URBI ET ORBI (*Latin*). To the City and for the World (used of the solemn blessing given by the Pope at certain times).

### SOME FAMILIAR GROUPINGS

THREE WISE MEN. Gaspar, Melchoir and Balthasar.

FOUR EVANGELISTS. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

FOUR GOSPELS. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

FIVE JOYFUL MYSTERIES. The Annunciation, the Visitation of the Virgin Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, the Nativity, the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, the finding of the Boy Jesus in the Temple after His parents had 'sought Him sorrowing.' (In the Roman Catholic Church, these form the first chaplet of the Rosary.)

FIVE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES. The Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Scourging of Jesus, the Crowning with a Crown of Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, the Crucifixion. (In the Roman Catholic Church, these form the second chaplet of the Rosary.)

FIVE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES. The Resurrection, the Ascension, the Gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Crowning of Our Lady in Heaven. (In the Roman Catholic Church, these form the third chaplet of the Rosary.)

SEVEN CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY. Feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, harbouring the stranger, visiting the sick, ministering to prisoners, burying the dead.

SEVEN DEACONS. Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicholas.

SEVEN DEADLY SINS. Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Envy, Gluttony, Anger, Sloth.

SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST. Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, Fear of the Lord.

SEVEN JOYS OF MARY. Given in the traditional folk carol (*Oxford Book of Carols: Oxford University Press*) as: the birth of Jesus Christ, Christ healing the lame, giving sight to the blind, reading the Bible in the synagogue, raising the dead, Christ on the Cross, and Christ wearing the Crown of Heaven.

SEVEN SORROWS OF MARY. The prophecy of Simeon ('Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also'), the flight into Egypt, the loss of the 12-year-old Jesus in Jerusalem, meeting Jesus on His way to Calvary, standing at the foot of the Cross, the taking down of Christ from the Cross, the burial of Our Lord. These are commemorated in the Roman Catholic Church on the Friday after Passion Sunday and on September 15th.

SEVEN SACRAMENTS. Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Absolution, Extreme Unction, Ordination, Matrimony.

SEVEN SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY. Converting the sinner, instructing the ignorant, counselling the doubtful, comforting the sorrowful, bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving injuries, praying for the living and the dead.

SEVEN VIRTUES. Faith, Hope, Charity, Justice, Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude.

TEN COMMANDMENTS. See Exodus 20 : 1-17.

TWELVE APOSTLES. Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew (or Levi), Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus (or Jude, or Judas brother of James), Simon the Canaanite, Judas Iscariot (replaced afterwards by Matthias).

FOURTEEN STATIONS OF THE CROSS. Christ condemned to death, Christ receiving the cross, His first fall, the meeting with His Mother, Simon of Cyrene being made to carry the cross,



Veronica wiping the face of Our Lord, Christ's second fall, Christ meeting the women of Jerusalem, His third fall, Christ stripped of His garments, Christ nailed to the cross, the death of Christ on the cross, the descent from the cross, the entombment.

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